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Broadway Translations.

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety"



A. V. LUNACHARSKI

Broadway Translations

THREE PLAYS OF
A. V. LUNACHARSKI

FAUST AND THE CITY
VASILISA THE WISE
THE MAGI

Translated by
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AND
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With an Introduction, and Author's Preface

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INTRODUCTION

Anatoli Vasilievich Lunacharski was born in the province of Poltava in 1876. His father was a landowner, the Lunacharskie being of semi-aristocratic squire stock, from which so many of the intelligentsia have sprung. He received a public school education at Kiev, and then passed on to the University of Zurich. It was there that his future lot was decided, in contact with other Russian emigrants, and also with Avenarius and Axelrod. From this period onward most of his time was passed in Switzerland, France, Italy, and intermittently in Russia.

From the first he was a Bolshevik; that is to say he joined the Marxian section of the Russian Social Democrats, which gained a *majority* at the Second and Third Congresses, and converted the word Bolshevik into a term of politics—the wholehoggers of Socialism—quite apart from the simple derivation of the word. He was a contributor to the first Marxian paper, *Krylia* (*Wings*). As a Bolshevik he belonged to the special group which founded and ran in the early years of this century the Marxian periodical, *Vperèd* (*Forward*), amongst his collaborators being Pokróvski, Bogdánov and Gorki, instituted lectures and school courses, and generally speaking did the spadework of the revolution. He was a member of the Moscow Committee of Socialists, and was exiled to Vologdá, whence he contrived to escape to Italy. In Switzerland he was one of the original editors of *Iskra* (*Spark*) up to its capture by the Mensheviks in 1906. He only returned to residence in Russia after the Revolution of 1917.

These few facts illustrate the genesis of Lunacharski's inspiration. He knows Italy and France thoroughly; he is filled with the love of the medieval homes of learning, and places many of his dreams in

the Middle Ages. At the same time his point of view is absolutely that of revolutionary Russia. It is the same striking contrast of ultra-modernity in thought, in combination with a semi-medieval city, which constitutes the puzzle of " modern " Moscow. Medievalism and Utopia meet without the intermediary of the nineteenth century—much as in *News from Nowhere*—the communal fights of the Middle Ages expressed in terms of Soviet Russia.

This intense faith in social reconstruction, coloured with living recollections from history, is what tinges Lunacharski's work, and to a certain extent differentiates him from his great revolutionary contemporaries. Blok, the inimitable and lovely lyrist, with a Sidneyan devotion to a Lady, who may be Russia or the New Faith, all beautiful but gossamer, like Shelley and as great ; Esénin with his more rough and passionate cry to some vague ideal, which those who are in Russia can see and feel as a very present and live force ; Demian Bedny, the popular satirist ; or, to take another school, the well known LEF (Left Front of Art), the *Esprit Nouveau* of France, which goes in for new and audacious forms of verse, the futurists and cubists of poetry ; these are all in a sense purer poets, something less practical. Lunacharski always has the dream of construction, of mankind building up a better way, though often relapsing. Thus, in a sense, his art is more pedestrian, never quite as lofty as the highest flights of his contemporaries, because he wants to build, not to soar into the Empirean ; whereas Blok and Bely make a sort of Empirean, a divinity, out of Unfaith.

Lunacharski's literary career may be roughly dated from the year 1900. His first publication was a collection of philosophic narratives. He is a voluminous writer. His 36 books would fill 15 full volumes. One early volume is " Studies," a collection of essays on philosophy from a Marxist objective point of view. They treat of art and poetry, contain appreciations of Maeterlinck and Korolenko, and some passages in them foreshadow his ripest poetry. In the same category we may include " The Foundations of Positivist

Æsthetics," "Revolutionary Silhouettes" and "Literary Silhouettes." This series of short essays includes attacks on the intelligentsia, and polemics, as well as less occasional productions, such as "Culture Under Capitalism," "Ideas in Masks," "Science, Art and Religion," "An Introduction to the History of Religion." He is always attracted and interested in the problem of religion, ranging himself to-day with what is called the anti-religious movement in modern Russia, which we should rather call an iconoclastic determination to have a secular State, with religion entirely a private matter of taste, not to be inculcated by any organ of State.

Lunacharski is also a great authority on music and the theatre, and all through his plays, especially those in verse, one feels the unwritten score resonant in it. *The Magi* and *Vasilisa* will in fact soon be staged as operas. He has also written on music of the Western European composers, and on the Russian; among his writings on the theatre may be mentioned "The Problem of the Revolutionary Repertory." He is shortly to publish a long book on æsthetics, and he has published criticisms on pictorial art. All of these again are tinged with the same consequential Marxist flavour. It is Positivism at its highest, the Service of Mankind.

Thus Lunacharski, like Blok and his contemporaries, though differently, expresses the mysticism of a formally atheist creed. This is clearest expressed in *The Magi*, but it pervades them all, even *Oliver Cromwell* and *Thomas Campanella*, historical plays. Life, he has said, must have an Emerald or Form. He has also said: In Literature we must adhere to the romantic school, in music to the so-called mighty atom, in painting to the school of movement—Repin and Surikov, and in drama to Ostrovski.

Such are his equipments for great drama. At the age of 20 he wrote *Temptation*, an immature work concerning a young monk possessed by a greater ideal than the Church could satisfy; the Devil tempts him with Lust, but the monk and Lust go forth in marriage to preach Socialism. His next play was *The King's Barber*—a story of bestial despotism bestially defeated.

It was written in prison. Next came *Faust and the City*, a remarkable forecast of the course of the Russian Revolution, finally recast in 1916, but written in 1908. Then came the comedies, including *Three Travellers and It*. *The Magi* was written in 1918 (its germ existed in his essay on "Positivism and Art," written in 1905), *Vasilisa the Wise* soon after, and *Ivan in Paradise* in 1919. Then he tried historical plays, *Oliver Cromwell* and *Thomas Campanella*; from that he returned to comedy, and in 1921 wrote *The Chancellor and the Locksmith* and *The Deliverance of Don Quixote*. The latter had been started in 1916. *The Bears' Wedding* appeared in 1922.

Of the three plays contained in this volume, two—*Faust and the City* and *The Magi*—will be entirely new to English readers, who may or may not have read *Vasilisa the Wise* in the limited edition of that play which was published last winter. In any case, a first volume of Lunacharski's plays would be inadequate without a work which, more than any other of his composition, has its roots in the folk-lore of his own people. In the matter of style and metre we have everywhere tried to adhere rigidly to the Russian, and to convey in English the rhythm and tonal suggestions of the original. It is hoped soon to publish a second volume containing *The Deliverance of Don Quixote*, *Oliver Cromwell* and *The King's Barber*. These are all studies of tyranny, of authority, its necessity, its excess, its remedy. It is the Russian Revolution shedding light on the agonies of the past, across time and space.

This, then, is Lunacharski's sphere, He is not an adherent of the LEF, the anarch rebels of art, or a religious mystic like Blok, who often suggests Blake, or a bourgeois aristocrat, like Tennyson, or a Radical reformer, like Browning. He is always a revolutionary as against the last named, but constructive as against the formless seekers of form, and on his guard against the infinite which the mystics pursue. To found his new order, he too has to find his new gods and to formulate the creed of a better world. It is the new non-Christianity which will not tolerate the Empire;

it is the spirit of Communism through which we may emerge from the chaos of Capitalism and the empiric errors of actual Communism.

These biographical facts have also a bearing on his style. His style in prose is lucid, with occasional flights into the poetic ; in poetry it is smooth, melodious, and moving freely in many forms, but never eccentric like that of the writers of the LEF ; nor does it ever quite attain the pure sublimity of Bely, Blok or Esénin at their highest. Indeed sometimes the strain of composition in the intervals of establishing a new and revolutionary system of education, leaves traces of hurry. But then he is very conscious of this, and *Mitra* is not yet available, for it is always being polished —just as his *Faust* and *Don Quixote* had to wait many years before their author passed them out as mature. His greatness is his schematism, and the consequentialness of his plays, the ardour and devotion and religious fervour which inspires all he says. As an author, he is full of echoes, very largely of the Bible, very often of opera, and frequently of his contemporary writers, who form a close association of communal work, only comparable to the intimacy in Elizabethan England of the great poets of that day. Then our poets in a sense, collaborated, either formally or in fact ; the intense sense of private ownership in a particularly happy turn of phrase may, after all, be only a passing mood in English contemporary literature. But Lunacharski, with all this, has a strong and individual style, and very much to say for himself, and in his own way. Post-war Russia has many great writers, and amongst them Lunacharski will always have a high place.

But in all this we have written of him in the abstract, as a literary fiction, who might as well go by any other name. He is very much alive. His intense energy, the broad intellectuality and sagacious kindness which, as it were, gleams out of a manner of severe reserve, his quick understanding, his gift of oratory and melodious voice, his exposition of complicated themes in such a wise that the audience wonder why they never knew

before how much already existed in their own cognisance ; such are briefly, some of the impressions of a personal contact.

L. A. M.
K. W.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Any reader who knows Goethe's great *Faust* will not fail to see that my *Faust and the City* is suggested by the scenes in the Second Part of *Faust,* where Goethe's hero founds a Free City. The mutual relations between this child of genius with its founder, the resolution of the problem, in dramatic form, of genius and its tendency to an enlightened despotism on the one hand, and a democracy on the other—such are the ideas that exercised me and prompted my work. I first elaborated the subject in 1906. The entire play was written in a month in that charming village in the Abruzzi, Introdacque, in 1908. For a long time the play was put aside. I took it up for a final revision, in exceptionally delightful circumstances, at the village of St. Leger on Lake Geneva, in 1916; the alterations principally consisted in very considerable cuts.

Some friends acquainted with my production think it represents a lively picture of the Russian Revolution. In any case I think it advisable to state that from December, 1916, there has not been the slightest modification of the text.

I had intended to publish this work, into which I had put all the best I could, at a quieter time; but I acceded to the pressure of my friends and decided to present it to the judgment of the public in the glorious and bitter and great days of the Socialist Revolution in Russia.

Anyone, however ill-informed of the history of Russia during the last four years, will understand that the quantity of work thrust on me since my appointment as People's Commissary for Education has been overwhelming. During this labour, incessant, responsible and very varied, I have been even more oppressed by

the extraordinarily exacting experiences and vicissitudes of the tragic struggle maintained by our party with its many enemies at home and abroad. There could never be any thought of rest or respite. So it occurred to me to create some mental relief for myself by taking up my pen and writing a poetic work, if possible, entirely unconnected with activities around me.

Naturally, my mind was filled with all sorts of emotions and ideas, thronging in from all sides through the circumstances of my life. The first product of this kind was the dramatic fantasy, *The Magi*. When I read it to my friends and told them that it had been written in eight nights, other Russian writers, including amongst them Valeri Briusov (whose fame as a poet has also spread to England), refused to believe in the possibility of such intensity of work, especially as the result was so finished and smooth. In my preface to this drama I referred to the immense mental relief afforded to me by the addition of eight sleepless nights to the eight days of work. Naturally, a little later, in January, 1919, I decided to repeat my experiment, and then there emerged, and was written in the course of a fortnight, the dramatic fairy tale, *Vasilisa the Wise*.

I have never, of design, in any of my writings, sought after obscurity, but neither have I been a disciple of rationalism in art. Possibly, to the very curious, it will appear that *Vasilisa* verges upon a problem play, and to folk of a different calibre that is indefinite. This very fact, it seems to me, proves that some measure has been observed—that there is in it a real thought, which is, however, not expressed exegetically, but artistically.

The subject of *Vasilisa*; the style of its composition, which is fairly novel, I think, in Russian literature; the great approbation it received, amongst others from my friend Maxim Gorki—these were all motives to make me continue with the elaboration of the same material. The result of this has been the second part of *Vasilisa*, called *Mitra the Saviour*, a long dramatic poem, for the publication of which for various

reasons I do not consider the present time opportune. I also intend to write a third part, to be entitled *The Last Hero*. The whole Trilogy will delineate in fabulous form a periphrasis of what I may term my social philosophy. This Trilogy can only be published in the course of some years.

A. LUNACHARSKI.

Faust and the City

A DRAMA FOR THE READER

Faust and the City

PROLOGUE

[*Night. The stars are shining brightly. The red moon is approaching the horizon. In the foreground to the left are mountains with wooded slopes, the bare crags of the heights making a sharp outline against the background of coppery redness of the setting moon Below, a valley in which lie the city and the sea as yet invisible.*

Mephistopheles, wrapped in a black cloak, is sitting overlooking the precipice. A tense stillness.]

Mephistopheles

Illusions! [*He takes a deep breath.*] Illusions! This night, pock-marked with gleams, is not the vestibule of eternal night, not a home-coming to the Mother, but only one revolution of the earth. In the æthereal ocean undulate to and fro, to and fro, from one extreme to another, stupid waves; glowing clusters emit light and heat, and beget life, sensation, consciousness . . . . and pain! That crass White Cow engenders, engenders and pours her milk into space, with never a thought about what may come of it! Life loves life, wants to live. What a paradox, what a ridiculous contradiction it is that sets the eternal Reason topsy-turvy!

And Man! Does not his everyday experience teach him what his imaginary existence really is, a flurry and scurry and ceaseless feverishness—an unappeasable disease. Yet he wants to live—this degenerate, this unprofitable scum, this parasite of earth! Go and tell him that true Being is perfection, immobility, a sleep without dreams, a majestic repose,—and should you find anyone to agree with you, it will be some sick hypochondriac, some rat of the privy that has never discovered its life. As for the others, they will jeer! They even imagine themselves rational, these petty worms! And they gnash their teeth at the sound of eternal wisdom.

Consider Faust. Has he not set his foot upon my neck, harnessed me to his chariot-wheels, this great sage? Ha-ha-ha! Like a little boy he has paddled in his little pond and built up a dam of a handful of sand and clay, and built some toy houses, and he is playing with his dolls. The little fool, picking up empty shells! How I long sometimes to stamp all this trumpery flat! But is a blow worth even the weakest argument? I have to convince him, I have to convince this haughty brainless dwarf. And no easy task! So I squat on my toes and lisp and show him educational pictures. Suppose I breathed on him with my eternal chill and turned him into a frail crumb of matter—would not the White Cow bear us other Fausts?

Since that time, when that happened, we have been powerless. . . . Who knows when the store of world perplexity shall drain off, when the waters shall recede?

No, it must be! Faust must be convinced—so that he cries out for very fear and pain and loathing! It must be! His cries must to all eternity poison the air which his kind breathes. So, Mephistopheles, put aside your crown of darkness; go forth to argue with the cretin. Weave spider-webs for the frivolous fly; hug to your breast the hope that it will soon be buzzing helpless in your net, and that you will at last suck the juice of life out of this chimerical and frantic pate.

PAUSE

Mephistopheles, would it not be better for you to be selfish—to hide yourself in some nook of the universe whence the stars are least seen, and there go to sleep on the Mother's lap? Is it not love that is moving you in these efforts to save life from pain? No! I swear by the Mother, no! I am guided by the holiest spite. I am a weapon. I have to prove. I busy myself in the name of Reason, which is my essence. Once It was born, Unreason—then I was born, Reason,—a protest, a recognition of the error, a yearning for peace. So I cannot hide; I must demonstrate. I am summoned to set Reason upright. I am devoured by an icy flame

of frenzy when I behold the complaisant torments of their existence. For me there is no rest, no release, as long as the world is ablaze, and motion a-stir, and life through suffering thinks. We will come home to you, Mother, and you shall yet uncreate us in the black ocean, you shall yet bestow on us the undisturbed repose of true Being.

Mephistopheles is an idealist. He is an idealist, do you hear, you stupid stars? Destroying, he creates. For the purpose of his creative destruction he has borrowed from men their tricks and masquerades, their body, dress, logic—nay, in season, too, it seems Mephistopheles has borrowed their suffering, and has started life on a loan of light and heat, wherewith to plenish his mighty shadow and to become the weapon of destruction for those who are to be destroyed in the name of the restoration of the One.

Sometimes my reason is entangled in the tatters of their costume. It is well from time to time to recollect, to strive to render, even in the speech of human thought, wisdom superhuman.

A Curse! The East is a-glow! The Earth, slowly revolving, is exposing to the sun her green and watery cheek, and that spot on her where, may be, there is proceeding the most decisive conflict between Unreason and Eternity. The sun is coming to succour his mean offspring. Let us hide!

[*He covers his head in his cloak.*]

The Pale Angel [*flying in the iridescent sky, sings, accompanying himself on the harp*]

Fair Princess Earth, thy slumber must thou break!
Thy Prince has come to kiss thee. So, awake!

[*The silent breeze is heard whispering to the plants.*]

The Breeze

Quaking, quivering, rustle
Blithe the blooms of earth,—
Grateful lisp and bustle,
Rouse to their new birth.

The Plants

Where the grass is thick, soft breeze,
Soothe it, smooth it, jester playful!
Stir up strife 'midst leaves and trees;
'Midst the willows set thy cradle.
Spray live flowers kisses, singing
Leaf-songs, herald of the Sun!
O'er the Earth breathe soft, low-ringing,
Holy hymns of life begun.

The Red Angel [*in the beams of the red dawn blows a golden trumpet, and then sings*]

Fair Princess Earth, thy slumber must thou break!
Thy Prince has come to kiss thee. So awake!

Choir of Birds [*sudden and noisy*]

See now the sun, the sun now surmounting the crest;
Sing and exalt him, our Loved one, again and again!
Gloria, Gloria! Louder yet sing with full breast!
Glorify Him ever crowned with a flaming of pain!
Pour on us streams of thy beautiful heat till it glow!
Shower down light—we will bathe in the beams of the morn!
Chant to the Holy One—praise Him whom none is may know,
Whom we inhabit, in whom now anew we are born!

A Little Bird

Light, light!
Life, life!
Flit and twit,
Loving it!
Chat and Chit!
Catches it!
Nestling's dawn!
Beak a-yawn!
Wants his life,—
Life, life!

Choir of Birds

He is risen—rejoice! He glows—to him pray!
Haste to Life's day!

In wondrous manner
Life gaily greets you,
His sweet face entreats you!
Salve! Hosanna!

Mephistopheles

A noise chorus! Though with a lot of loathsome sense in it! Oh, ye little winged vermin, ye distant descendants of the Terrible Error, ye are indeed celebrating the source of your existence! But—I am glad to see the hawk has clutched one of your songsters. The hawk also praises the sun, but in his own fashion.

[*The rays of the sun penetrate into the valley. The City, like a lace-work of towers and spires, awakens, kindling in the morning splendour. The sea glistens.*]

The Bells

Shadows steal away,
Daylight floods the height.
Night gives way to day,
Shadows all in flight.
Golden is our chime,
Sweet our carillon,
Ringing in sweet rhyme,
Bells of crystal tone.
Peals of joy we play,
Echoing repeat,
Joyous peals, and sweet,—
Day! Ding, dong, ding! Day!

The Noise of the City

Work, rousing slow,
Starts on its droning course;
There come and go
Man, mule and horse,
Wheels clattering beat,
The chapmen cry.
But still am I
Not yet complete,
Still growing.—All a-blare
Is the bazaar, as though
A fire were raging there
And a great wind did blow.

On the quay
Sailors stand,
Weigh anchor and sing;
By the sea,
With one hand
Fishermen trumpeting;
Near the strand,
Tall ships, and between,
To and fro,
May be seen
Little boats meandering.

Rasp of steel now rises and falls;
Stone-carts rumble here and there;
Noise and clamour everywhere
Answer now the daylight calls!

Sleepless all the long night-time,
From his garret the poet peers;
Labour breathing hot he hears,
And composes a living rhyme.

From the open door
Like incense pour
With strange refrains
Loud organ strains.
They soar on high,
O'er gables they fly;
Now their reeds thrill
With a holy trill,
Then in sudden fright
On earth they alight;
In a fugal glory
They whisper their story
To voices divine.
The cathedral stones,
All atremble, then
Responding, combine
In deep bass moans,
Amen!

FAUST AND THE CITY

A bugle's blare
Rends
The slumbering air,
And ends.
Then, foreboding wounds and blood,
Come the drums with roll and thud.
By'r left—quick—march !
And, like an arch
Of purple flame, behold
The silken flag unfold !

Song of the Lancers

Lancers, let your cheers ring out !
Stand, like your lances, straight and stout !
Then to the charge—oh, Lancers all—
Charge and slay at the trumpet's call !
Boldly slay and boldly die—
Not for us to question why.
Some folk prate : thou shalt not kill ;
We may slay, yet do no ill.
Boldly die and boldly slay—
Peter won't turn us away.
Soldiers follow other laws,
Deaf to all the groans they hear.
Peter must forgive because
He once lopped a lacquey's ear.
Who takes the sword, by sword shall die ?
We're no cowards, we laugh haw-haw,
Stroke our beards down spruce and spry,
Kiss our girls—by Lancers' Law—
Yet offend not Him on high !
Trumpets soon for us will blare ;
Merrily we'll fight and straight.
Someone fallen ? C'est la guerre !
What do you expect of fate ?

Song of the Monks

God, God, to thee we turn !
In dust we lie,
In fear we die,
Thy face is still so stern.
We sink in paths whereon we stray,—

Oh pity, pity Adam's kind!
We here in dark despair confined,
To see the stars of hope we pray.
Our flesh with whips we scourge and tear;
In dust we lie,
In fear we die.
Oh, not for us to dare
Raise to God's scales our eyes unwary
Of sins so many, so great!
O miserere!
Ye Hosts Immaculate,
Pray with us in our fears!
Thou, at God's throne of ire,
Plead for us, and inspire
Firm faith, and let thy tears
Wash us, oh Virgin Mary!
O miserere!

The Workmen [are building a palace and sing]

By whom is one foundation laid,
Defiant of all age to stand?
By Labour, in its might arrayed—
By the victorious Workers' Hand!

This porphyry that dykes the dune,
Firm rampart on Time's flood-swept strand,
By whom save Labour was it hewn,
By the world-ruling Workers' Hand!

Who makes our palace roof of gold
To flash afar across the land?
A band of brothers true and bold,
United by the Workers' Hand.

Who crowns our palace with a spire
Of rubies? 'Tis that giant-band,
Whose dreams, compliant to desire,
Come true under the Workers' Hand!

The People-King shall hold high state;
Supreme now shall his empire stand;

Rich shall he be, and wise and great,—
And his device—the Workers' Hand!

Mephistopheles [*leaning out over the City*]

The nonsensical symphony is reaching its climax. Let us then descend now and play our part in it! Our design is ready. Over the City an invisible spider's web is being spun. So—to begin!

[*He descends, the morning breeze blowing his black cloak open.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE I

[*The audience room in Faust's palace, with carved oak panelling in late Gothic style, is divided by two steps between the back of the stage and the front. On the wall there are three handsome niches with bronze statues of Plato, Aristotle and Albertus Magnus. The upper part of the room is covered with a rich carpet. The table is spread with a tapestry table-cloth, and has on it writing materials and a few folios, and beside it stand a huge globe and a throne-like armchair. Several small Venetian armchairs. In the lower part some solid oaken seats. At the back, a small door, screened with tapestry, showing Faust's blazon, a fist in an iron glove holding a torch, leads to Faust's private apartments. At the door stands a picturesque lancer, leaning on his halberd.*

Enter Faust and Faustina.

Faust is an old man, tall and straight. He wears a cap of velvet embroidered with gold, from under which fall snow-white curls. His beard covers his chest. His appearance is kind and affable,—a very mobile face, and often an expression of majestic self-satisfaction. His eyes are dark and youthful, his eye-brows black and well outlined He is dressed in a long blue velvet tunic, the sleeves trimmed with lace. His hands are thin and delicate.

Faustina is a tall, pale girl of great beauty. Her eye-lashes are usually downcast. She wears a silver brocaded cap, from under which escape two luxuriant auburn curls. Her dress is of a silvery material and of simple design.

They are returning from an early morning walk. Faust is gracious and merry.]

Faust

What a fine walk. . . . And when you—let me see, Faustina, you are now nineteen years old ?

Faustina

Yes, father.

Faust

Yes—when you were born, all this green life was still in its infancy, all those rare trees scarcely a man's height. And now ! Was it not worth that struggle with the sea ? Such life, such stately life ! How grandly the Earth bears and brings forth, giving herself to the caresses of the air and the kisses of the sun. It was

down in that valley—the one surrounded with tall poplars—I confess I once wept, just like an old baby! And, what was even more foolish, I was ashamed of my tears, even before you, my dear. . . . How tranquil it all was! All the more so for the rustling of the leaves. But just then a little songster began chanting his mass, the trees standing up like huge green candles. He was singing, singing glory to his god.

Faustina

What god?

Faust [*with an all-embracing gesture*]

To Pan!

Faustina [*rather nervously*]

Father, why is it that of all your beautiful temples in Trotzburg, there is none consecrated to Pan? Why do they all honour that pale god with his wreath of thorns and his mother of afflictions? And why are the priests who officiate so fat, like his Grace Bishop Wilfrid?

Faust [*laughing and putting his hands to his ears*]

Questions! Questions! What a lot of questions! My silent Faustina, are you going to join my enemy-friends, such as Master Gabriel?

[*Faustina starts as though to speak, but lowers her eyes and says nothing.*]

Faust [*sitting in one of the little chairs by the table*]

Why is it there is no service to Pan in my churches? Why? Because it would alarm all my powerful neighbours, patrons and vassals. And what would be the use of that? They would start a holy crusade against me, and then I should have to shed oceans of blood. That is one reason why Jesus is worshipped here. But I consider his religion in its own way lofty, instructive and serviceable, and its myths and ceremonies are beautiful. As for Bishop Wilfrid—he is a great artist and a man of fine intellect. Let us not be fanatics, my little girl. There is nothing more horrible than fan-

aticism. Could you endure a man who is narrow and spiteful? Just keep in mind, then, that whenever even the best and most sensible of men becomes a devotee of one idea, however noble and fine it may be, he becomes narrow and spiteful. If, at the helm of my sovereign State, created by me out of nothing, there stood—say, for instance, Master Gabriel—what irreparable disasters would come of it! Substantially, his ideas are the same as mine, but only the merest fraction of mine, one colour out of a whole palette.

And, by the way,—about this fellow Gabriel. Do you know, he made me quite angry with him the other day? I had to speak to him rather sharply. And I know his mother comes to you for help in the good work of visiting the poor and sick. . . . Well, tell her that I —that I do really love this upstart! [*He smiles.*]

But judge for yourself. [*He gets up.*] I had summoned six of my best craftsmen—among them Gabriel and that foreign braggart, the Scotchman. I explained to them the need of building another tower, like my Falcon Tower. I pointed out the site for it, a site really worthy of giants—a swamp in the broad plain near Zuidkerken, which would first have to be drained. Suddenly Gabriel begins to complain that this will cost the lives of tens or even hundreds of workmen. I tell him: "My good friend, quite possibly. We are waging war with nature. Honour and glory to those who fall in the strife!" But, says he: "One must not, for a great caprice, kill men who want to live, taking advantage of the need that drives them to work." I got rather angry. I do get angry when I am opposed with arguments not entirely lacking in common sense. And he is by no means devoid of common sense, this Master Gabriel. What he lacks is readiness of wit, adaptability. To halt at every step and start moralising and analysing —that would be the end of the chapter for any growing society of human beings! After all, there is something higher than morals, or even logic, and that is—life, life that desires increase. . . . . But we have been philosophising enough. [*He turns to the lancer.*] Pieter, see if there is anyone in the waiting room.

The Lancer [*opening the door*]

It is full, your Highness.

[*Faust sits on his throne-like armchair, Faustina on a bench at his feet. The Secretary comes in, dressed in black, with a golden chain round his neck. He gives a long list of petitioners to Faust, who looks through it with some curiosity.*]

Faust

I shall not be able to receive a tenth of these to-day. Let us see, now. . . . Ah, the Florentine artist, Jacopo Dellabella. . . . Call him in! Faustina, you do not know him as well as you should; he is a great and wonderful man. He can do—everything!

[*The Secretary ushers in Dellabella, a thin little man with a rough grey beard, and bristling hair on a big head. He is dressed in a shabby velvet costume. He bows low several times, sweeping the ground with the scraggy plume of his hat.*]

Faust

Come nearer, maestro. Do not fear to tread the steps that separate me from common men. Your plans, Dellabella.

Dellabella [*triumphantly unrolling a long parchment*]

These are they! (*A minute's pause.*) My idea is this: A round edifice, of a size undreamed of hitherto, standing on a square platform reached by sixteen steps, each side to be 6,000 ells, the edifice surmounted with a dome lofty enough to enclose the tallest spire in this city. Inside, it would appear to rise up from four huge pediments, each bearing aloft on its dizzying summit a group of graceful columns, passing directly into four flying buttresses supporting the dome that crowns the whole building. And there I introduce a rose window of 60 ells diameter, of sparkling coloured glass, where shall stand a heroic representation of the Godhead in white robes, with a mighty gesture of his hand bestowing upon us light, motion and order. And the Godhead shall have the most majestic features ever beheld by human eye—the features of your Illustrious Highness, first of all rulers on earth.

[*He bows low.*]

Faust [*looking at the plan*]

A gigantic flattery, my dear Dellabella.

Dellabella [*with an impulsive gesture raising both hands above his head as though to ward off a blow*]

My Lord, the tribute of an artist's admiration. So far from being flattery . . .

Faust

Flattery, flattery, Dellabella, but gigantic!

Dellabella

Other statues and pictures will represent spirits of a lower order—the elements . . .

Faust [*interrupting*]

I am just thinking. Would it not be rather invidious, Dellabella? Granted that none but fools would fail to understand the admitted lawfulness of such a monument in my honour, here, in one of the finest cities of Europe, capital of a flourishing country, which I evoked out of nothingness—I, I alone! Yet it is embarrassing to hear the objections even of a fool, when one's own merit is in question. Sometimes, indeed, I wish . . . But let us not be gloomy! They tell me the local stone is poor stuff. But I built the Falcon Tower with it, and the quay, and most of this palace. They say our men here are poor stuff—yet might a great master achieve a great work with them. Has Baron Mephisto looked after you properly? When are you going to begin the portrait of my beautiful Faustina?

Dellabella

I am enraptured with the favours that are showered upon me here. If I may be paid the hundred ducats promised for that purpose, I will prepare to carry out everything for your Highness. As for the portrait, which I approach with a shyness almost as great as my delight at seeing the illustrious original, I will commence on the day it shall please the Serene Princess to felicitate by her choice. Following the example of my fellow countryman, Vinci, we will surround Her Highness with

music and recitals of the most pleasant stories, and so relieve the tedium of the sittings,—which to me will fly by with the celerity of Zeus' lightning, and will be my very happiest hours.

Faust

Enough, enough, maestro—you disconcert my northern-born fledgeling!

[*The artist bows and goes out.*]

Faust

Now, that man—by his chatter you would take him for a commonplace Italian charlatan; but he is really a great master. Jester in his talk, he is so amusing; but a great man in his work! Sometimes I think every artist ought to be a sovereign prince: otherwise even the finest heads, lacking a crown, have to wear the jester's cap of servility to satisfy us, their lords. And our manners are still rude, Faustina. Those poor artists! But let us not be gloomy! Especially as I see yet another great name on the list. Secretary, ask Niklaas Nielsen, the mariner, to come in.

[*The Secretary introduces Nielsen. He is a broad-shouldered man with bushy beard and whiskers and greyish hair. He wears a dark coat with a leather girdle, and carries a whip.*]

Nielsen

Your Highness, excuse my dress and my whip. Knowing you are interested in my voyages, and dislike useless ceremony, I came straight from my frigate, without troubling about court polish. On this last voyage we had such music aboard as if the Devil himself had married a score of imps and the "Albatross" was dancing to his princely wedding tune. Yet I sailed further South than ever before—down the coast of Africa. I have brought back golden sand, elephants' tusks, some fragrant wood. But the greatest gift I have brought to Europe is some black men of extraordinary strength—half-men, rather; but capable of man's work. Certainly they need a good deal of the whip. Yet they are not stupid: when they see before them the choice of death under the lash, or work, they choose

work. They are stronger than mules, of great endurance, tidy fellows and cheery withal. And, above all, there is no standing on ceremony with them. Do you see, sir, why there is no occasion for pity? It is very doubtful whether they have souls at all. If they have, their souls cannot be like Christian souls. I can supply Your Highness with any quantity of them at 20 ducats apiece. Any number your Highness may require. A fact, I swear by St. Elmo! Shall I show you some, sir? I brought a few samples with me. I have forty on board. I started with a larger cargo, but ended with only forty; the rest, somehow or other, went to feed the fishes.

Faustina [*to her father*]

What is he saying?

Faust

This is—curious.

[*Two sailors bring in four negroes in chains. They are huge coal-black creatures, with big whites of the eye, curly-haired and thick-lipped.*]

Faust

Almost animals. . . .

Nielsen

But they work like men. Down, you apes, down!

[*He brandishes his whip and the negroes prostrate themselves.*]

Faust

Don't strike them, Captain—I cannot stand that!

Nielsen

Without it, it's useless. And, besides, as I explained, there's no call to pity them. That's the way to make them obey you. And easier to deal with than a gang of white convicts! Every Christian seems to be possessed of a devil of insubordination. Not that I don't ship Christians too; but if you send one of them to Kingdom Come, who knows what will be said about it there, eh? And sometimes it can't be helped,

though it is hard to stifle every feeling of pity for those who are just like ourselves. I think the Devil himself must have some compassion for his dam, when he is teaching her her business with his iron pestle. [*He laughs loudly.*]

Faust [*stroking his beard reflectively and looking at the negroes*]

Yes. . . . To possess a labour force about which there was no call for compassion. . . . To the great, there must be obedience. Your are right, Captain. But, you see, I have compassion even for the horse and the ass. Though I am not just like an ass—you will agree, Captain, am I ?—even less than you resemble these black anthropoids ?

Nielsen

The Duke is compassionate. Compassion is a vice.

Faust

In the great ?

Nielsen

Even in the small.

Faust

A philosopher, Captain ! What school do you profess ?

Nielsen

The school of the sea, Your Highness. That's where I had my schooling.

Faust

Well, I will see how your charming brunettes can work. But they shall be treated humanely.

Nielsen [*with a contemptuous smile*]

Then they will strangle their overseers, that is all. Talk to them without a whip—impossible ! They have a standard of their own. No, I cannot undertake to give them up to you, Duke, unless their new master introduces himself to them with a taste of the lash that will make mine seem like a mother's caress.

Faust [*seriously*]

That condition I cannot accept.

Nielsen

The Archbishop is ready to buy them—your neighbour.

Faust

We will think it over, Niklaas. Stay awhile in Trotzburg.

[*Nielsen bows and takes his leave. As he goes, Mephistopheles enters. He is dressed in a bright red costume of the period, and carries a hat with a cock's plume. On his breast is the Order of the Golden Fleece, and he wears a long sword with a golden hilt. He is very tall and strongly built, his face tawny, his little pointed beard black, his hair so closely cropped that it looks like a skull-cap, thin lips, usually closed in an acid smile, and eyebrows drawn up triangularly. His eyes are large and cold and vacuous, in sharp contrast with the sinister but often humorous expression of his face.*]

Mephistopheles [*bowing with a comical solemnity*]

Duke . . .

Faust

Oh—Mephisto! This means that the happy day I was promising myself in spite of Niklaas' unmannerliness is over. Probably you bring a mass of disagreeables.

Mephisto

As always, I am the Duke's eye, the only one that does not deceive him—I am the Duke's ear, which . . .

Faust

Which I should like to block up!

Mephisto

Does the Duke fear the truth?

Faust

My friend, truth is relative. It consists of the material we take in from without, and the form we ourselves give it. These eyes and ears of mine have the power of imposing on any matter a decorous, or at least a tolerable, form. But my third eye and my third ear, after selecting

monstrous and abortive things out of their surroundings, go farther, and array them in a garb even more monstrous than their reality.

Mephisto

My images are the expression of Being—as it is—undraped. Nature has given them shaggy hair and tails and scales. But you, Duke, demand in all things a courtly apparel, neatly tailored, in rosy satins and sky-blue velvets. Even Death, when her turn comes to be presented to you—and she is monstrous enough, that noseless beldame—will have to comply with etiquette and look pleasant.

Faust

Most certainly! The Stoic philosophy has contrived her a most becoming veil. And you would really like to tear it off her in the hope of frightening me with your so-called truth—skeletons, putrefaction, worms? But all this talk is no more than human mummery; for death in itself is neither evil nor good, but as it were the zero in nature. Good and Evil are inventions of Man.

Mephisto

So now our philosophical discussion is proceeding merrily, oh Faust; here we are, dancing a metaphysical minuet, curtseying, skipping, and coquettishly lifting our skirts. Meanwhile, over your country—only look! —the waves are breaking.

Faust [*anxiously*]

What's that? Some damage to the dykes?

Mephisto

The waves of rebellion, Duke.

Faust [*relieved*]

Oh, that's for the police!

Mephisto [*taking a step forward and in a quiet and ominous voice*]

Old Rebble and his wife are at it again. I have arrested

him, and will bring him at once before you, Faust. [*Aloud.*] Princess, I will ask you to withdraw to your apartments.

[*Faustina, with an anxious glance at her father, goes out.*]

Faust

Of whom and of what are you speaking, oh Evil Spirit that never gives me rest ?

Mephisto [*solemnly*]

Faust, Faust, how I should like to give you rest !

Faust

I yearn for activity, and for that I need quietude. I want to get on with my work without interruptions.

Mephisto [*maliciously*]

What you want is to stand in a corner, shielded from all fears on three sides, and to have only one foe straight in front of you. But I tell you truly, Faust, you have a countless host of enemies behind you and beside you and within, whole regiments above you and beneath you. And in all things you will be disquieted and mortally fatigued ; and you will not lie down to sleep but dreams will drive you from your bed ; and you will toss and toss until you ask for real rest—and then you will be mine, Faust,—then !

Faust

You insane devil, your fiendish wit spins ever like a top about one point. But above all I do not want to listen to your abominable reports, because you are a great slanderer. Yes, a great slanderer !

[*Mephisto claps his hands. Two powerful lancers lead in a thin, surly old man in chains He is dressed in goat-skins, under which his body shows bronze ; his face is covered with deep wrinkles, like so many weals ; his beard is rumpled, full of straw and burdock, his hair falls low on his forehead, and his eyes glisten like a wolf's.*]

Faust

Who is this ?

Mephisto

Ask him.

Faust

Who are you, old man ?

Rebble

And who are you, old man ?

Faust

I am Duke Faust.

Rebble

You are a murderer, like all your fellows. Tell them to release me, you slayer of men !

Mephisto

Hold him firmer, or he will make a dash at His Highness

Faust

But . . . this . . . is only a poor sick man.

Rebble [*smiles darkly and sings in a whining voice*]

Me have ye goaled and chained and burned ;
I have writhed in bitter agony,
I have wasted to death for liberty ;
But how to slay me ye never learned.
I have gnawed my fingers, lacking food ;
I have rotted in dungeons, dank, forlorn ;
My flesh in shreds vultures have torn
And feasted in the martyr's blood.
And I have been one running sore
Under the lash, my life's blood lost.
And oft my carcase, ocean-tossed,
From ocean deeps was washed ashore.
But, from my ashes to new birth
I rise again, I rise from death ;
My soul returning home to earth,
Builds a new body for its breath.
I went, I come, and on I go ;
I will eat through the whole world's chains,

And dry the tears of all brought low—
The last of tears for the last of pains.
How shall I dry the tears of woe—
Tears of oppressed and humbled slaves?
Down with the tyrant's purple show!
To your graves, princes! Down to your graves!
Down! And be ancient wrongs forgot,
And cleansèd be all hearts of pride,
When, in their blood-stained graves to rot,
Your heads and crowns fall side by side!

Is it enough? Else I can sing more. For the rest, I am all here.

Faust

Horrible man, you are ill.

Rebble

Of course! We are all ill, and you are our illness. It is cured by fire and the sword. I fear nothing. Bear that in mind! Not—that we are many; not—that I am immortal; but only this—that I fear nothing, and so in the end shall conquer you,—shall plant this worn and muddy shoe on the perfumed neck of the mighty!

Mephisto

Duke, the great of this world strike with a mighty hammer on the hearts of mankind; but a force meets a resistance equal to itself, as your esteemed Florentine teaches. So, in a way, this old man is your own reflection—as it were a distorted plebeian portrait of you. I really don't know—should I have his head struck off? Such beings are in themselves deathless, being reflexes. If in the end all the heads of all the Rebbles are to fall, there would have to be a beheading of Authority. Authority strikes off the head of its own shadow, and then wonders that it grows again. They call Rebble a hydra.—Or should I have him lodged in some place where they'll keep him safe?

Faust

Let him go. Here his hatred is unavailing. Here the subjects love their lord.

Rebble

The wife and I, we'll gnaw away a little of that love! We still have our teeth . . . our teeth!

Faust

I am neither tyrant nor murderer. This does not disturb me. I am the creator and benefactor of this land—her first workman. I can even indulge in a test of my people's gratitude.

Mephisto

Take him out by the city gates and set him free.

Rebble

I swear to you, you devourer of men, I shall pay you off for this magnanimity when I spit in your proud eyes.

[*He is led away.*]

Faust

What a melancholy sight!

Mephisto

This lunatic has a most sagacious wife. I know the old couple—they are of my own stock, indeed, distant kinsmen of mine. The old woman's name is Envie. The old witch conducts her affairs very nicely, affording no legal ground for arrest. All she does is to compare—to compare everything—housing, food, dress, work, power, honour. . . . She draws parallels, which are in truth magical lines. Under my very eyes, delight in the splendour of distinguished patrons, and pride in their power, have been perverted into an unruly hatred. She has a most original outlook on the world.—But enough of that! Your Highness has had timely warning; for the present, things are taking their course. . . . At this moment, Duke, there stand at the gates of your palace a crowd of craftsmen, yelling as loud as if Rebble and Envie had been here not three weeks but three years. They have nearly broken through the gates. Of course the guard will not let them in; you receive only whom you will. But,

amongst them, I noticed that dissolute and pernicious fellow, Gabriel. He is their spokesman, and he will not believe that Your Highness will refuse to receive them,—although it is merely a matter of some girl or other who, it seems, was carried off last night. They suspect the culprit stands high at Court. I have investigated the affair, and I surmise that the girl is frivolous. I should never have committed myself to disturbing Your Highness for such a trifle. But if the Duke could only hear their clamour! Big Hans is standing with his long legs wide apart waving his arms like a windmill, and yelling like a costermonger: "What's all this about the justice of Faust!" Naturally I gave instant orders for their dispersal, but . . .

Faust

I am hardly in the mood just now . . . but still, admit them. . . . The morning had begun so well!

Mephisto

An evil omen, Faust! Whatever starts well, ends ill. Not that what starts ill ends any better.

[*He goes out.*]

Faust [*alone*]

Fleeting shadows, all this—fleeting shadows! And God's image cannot be carved without the rubble flying in all directions and the sculptor's face and beard being covered with the chips of the marble. A fund of spiritual insight—of blithe spiritual understanding—that is what man needs, what I have found in my work. Faust, keep your mind clear and your heart blithe, and remember how much you have done—how much you want to do, must do.—But they really are making a row!

[*A group of craftsmen enter noisily behind Mephistopheles, who withdraws from them, gesticulating. Seeing Faust, there is a hush and they stand at some distance, shifting from one foot to the other, cap in hand. Among them are prominent a venerable old man, Wahrhaft, his son, Big Hans, and the master-craftsmen, Gabriel and Will Scott.*]

Faust

What do you want of me, my children? And why so much noise, as though you were really children? But wait—first let me say one word. This day has already brought me a number of little worries. I am already weary, though the mortar has not yet sounded noon. . . . Children, I work hard—probably harder than any of you. And it is for you I work—for the City, the darling of my heart. So do not exhaust me with constant petitions and complaints. You have a good judge in Mijnheer Jan van der Hoog,—go to him.

[*Big Hans makes a gesture of impatience, but Gabriel stops him and steps forward. Faust frowns.*]

Gabriel

Most honoured Duke, we all appreciate and revere your work. It would never occur to us to disturb you with our mishaps, grave though they be, were there any other road available to justice. You will remember, wise sovereign, that more than once the Brotherhood of Free Masons and the General Assembly of Craftsmen have sent me and my comrade, Will Scott, as a deputation to beseech of you, as the true father of his young people, to create the office of Tribunes, freely elected by all without exception, by guilds, master-craftsmen, foremen and 'prentices—all on an equal footing. Then we should have our own court for matters outside trade disputes, and need not disturb you, Duke. For—if you will pardon me, most gracious sovereign—you have set over us a judge who indeed may be a man of great learning, but is meek before the mighty, and certainly not overburdened with intelligence.

Faust

My dear Gabriel, you are notoriously a democrat, a dreamer, and so steeped in Plutarch as to imagine yourself a citizen of some ancient republic. When you were godfather to the son of the blacksmith, Maurits, did you not give him the name of Brutus? Quite innocent fantasies, these, in a private individual; but God forbid that we should try to realise them in our

social order! You will find older men, men of greater experience and learning, who, knowing the worth of democracy, yet understand also the incomparable value of an enlightened monarchy.

Hans

Stop!—Monarchy or Republic—what has that got to do with it? Have we come here to pour peas from one measure into another? Heaven's fury! My sister, Duke, give me back my sister! Father, speak—you!

Wahrhaft [*in utter confusion*]

Your Highness—my daughter—Ortruda—whom you will deign to remember, for you once gave her a little gold chain. . . . She, my daughter, sleeps in a corner room, always with the window open. [*Aside to Hans.*] No, boy,—wait! Let me tell His Highness everything from the beginning. . . . She sleeps with her window open. I am a light sleeper. Perhaps Your Highness knows how lightly old men do sleep? And Pluto, our dog, likewise. As for Hans, as it happens, he spent the night at the Applegarden Inn. Possibly your Highness remembers Emma, the daughter of the innkeeper, who won second prize at the beauty show at which Your Highness gave the first prize to my daughter Ortruda?

Hans [*interrupting him*]

The point is, Duke, that some robber carried off my sister through the window, He had thrown poisoned bread to Pluto and put some drug in his water, the fiendish brute! The villain must have accomplices; I found tracks of horses, leading to the nearest cross-roads. Heaven's fury, if I catch the brute, I'll tie him up in a knot that even the wisdom of Faust won't undo! My sister! Will you permit it, Duke? My Ortruda! The monster! And I know who the villain is!

Gabriel

It is only a surmise—we must have an exhaustive enquiry.

Faust

Whom do you suspect, then, of this truly dastardly crime ?

Gabriel

Don't say, Hans,—don't say, as long as you. . . .

Hans

I shall tell everything, because it lies heavy on my heart. The culprit is Faustulus, the merry Prince. Yes, Faustulus ! It's not the first time he's tried to get her !

Faust [*rising and looking at him menacingly*]

Take care, boy !

Hans

I am not a man to be frightened ! Why are you staring at me ? Were your eyes daggers I would not retreat one step. It is Faustulus ! He has been threatening her. Emma, and other girls, too, overheard him. It's no good hiding him away under the bed or in some out of the way place. Let him come here ! If he is the son of his father he can at least look his accuser in the face.

Faust [*sitting down with a constrained smile*]

Good—good ! That is the spirit ! Why are you not a soldier ?

Hans

Because I have no desire to fight for money or, still less, for the interests of others. But in my own cause, I am always prepared to stand firm.

Faust [*still smiling*]

How did you manage to be the son of so peaceable a man as Wahrhaft ?

Hans

Just as Faustulus managed to be yours.

Faust

Oh—oh! Don't try to push my patience too far! I might get really angry and then. . . . Faustulus shall come here and dispel your supicions.

Hans

Yes, yes,—we must have it out!

Faust [*smiling again*]

Have you many of this sort, Gabriel?

Gabriel

Your Highness, you do not yet know your people; in them lie hidden treasures far exceeding those of Solomon's Temple.

Faust [*laughing*]

Are there, indeed, O Gracchus van Bond? Well, then—the less cause for gloom! Yes, Hans, you shall have your sister back. Whatever it cost, we will put this matter straight. [*To his Secretary.*] Request the Prince's attendance. [*The Secretary bows and leaves.*] Quietly now, and all will be well, Hans,—I give you my ducal word.—Well, Gabriel, how is the draining of the swamps getting on, under the new fortifications?

Gabriel

Not well, Your Highness; there is much illness among the workmen, We have as many shifts as possible, but nobody wants to stop on a job like that.

Faust [*reflecting*]

Niklaas suggests black labour.

Gabriel

The time is not yet ripe, Your Highness.

Faust

Oh, you are right, you are right, mediator for the oppressed! If I succeed in——But for that, you see, I shall need time. And, on the Zuidkerken side, our territory is co-terminous with the lands of that savage

fool Beeresberg. By building a good strong tower there, we shall both drain the noxious swamp and cut off that madman's chances of provoking bloodshed—which, as I know, he contemplates.

Gabriel

He will never venture to attack you, Your Highness. And meanwhile, we lose men and arouse in the hearts of the survivors strong feelings of resentment against the sovereign.

Faust [frowning]

Have you ever seen a sovereign more patient than I am ?

Gabriel

Why should not Your Highness be patient ? After all, you always have everything your own way. It would be quite different had you to comply with our demands according to a charter. . . .

Faust [drily]

That will never come about, Gabriel. A State in which the head obeys the body is ridiculous.

[*Enter Faustulus. He wears a magnificent coat of pomegranate velvet, with the Order of the Golden Fleece and other decorations, lace, jewelled rings, and jewelled buckles. His thin yellow hair falls to his shoulders, tightly curled. He has a pale face, narrow forehead, strong protruding chin, little watery eyes, and a big nose arrogantly tilted*]

Faustulus

You sent for me, father ? But, I see you are occupied with the populace. [*He moves to go.*]

Faust

No—no ! The business touches you. Just imagine, the daughter of this fine fellow, the mason Wahrhaft, was spirited away last night—an unheard-of incident in our City, in all my land. There stands a youth—an honourable and fine lad, her brother. But even honourable and fine men sometimes get bees in their bonnets—forgive the expression, Hans, my dear child—and ridiculous ideas. And such a notion has nestled in the

turbulent head of my Hans. He is inferring from some threats of yours—it is absurd to repeat it—some threats against a girl and so on. . . . Imagine, Faustulus, he is tempted to charge you with the abduction of this pretty Ortruda. You remember Ortruda, the queen at the Labour Festival I inaugurated five months ago? A very pretty girl!

Faustulus [*shrugging his shoulders*]

Do you expect me to remember all the pretty girls in the City?

Hans

Liar! Excuse me, Duke, but he is a liar. And now I am quite convinced that he is guilty.

Faust

Careful, Hans!

Hans

Prince Faustulus, did you not speak to Ortruda last Monday at the fountain, on your way back from the hunt? Did you not ask her to let your horse have a drink? Did you not call her by her Christian name? Did you not compare her with a rose in full bloom? Answer!

Faustulus

Father, please spare me converse with drunken roysterers. Even at this distance I can smell their vile sour wine. Have some consideration for me—for my birth and breeding!

Hans

No, Prince!—No, my friend, you can't get out of it that way. Hans would rather forfeit his own head than. . . . Did you not at the same hour on Tuesday come expressly to the fountain and repeat all these same blandishments over again? And when my sister returned you a fitting answer, did you not threaten her that princes cannot be refused, and that, if refused, they are wont to carry off for themselves what has pleased them?

Scott

And this was said after the girl had explained—as several women who were there can attest—that she had a sweetheart—and that I was he ?

Faustulus [*showing his teeth*]

Oh, after such an explanation did I venture to persist ? Did I risk offending such an important personage ? Though . . . my good friend, who are you ?

Scott [*indignant*]

I thought there were no jesters at our Duke's court !

Faustulus [*with a constrained calm*]

You boor, you know I am a Prince, and so cannot fight you.

Hans

So, you will not fight me ? No ? Then I appeal to the Divine Ordeal ! I will prove, in any suitable way, that you are the suborner of my sister and of my family's good name. Choose your own weapon !

Faustulus [*smiling*]

Do you not understand, you animal, that I am a being cast in quite another mould ? Should I fight a duel with a cock ? Explain it to him, father. It bores me.

Hans

So, you are cast in another mould ? Well, let us open our veins, and see whose blood flows redder and more abundantly. Or would you prefer some other competition ? I am a master of six trades, and can do first class work in them all. Can you do that ? Or any test ! I will even undertake a disputation with you in Latin. Or, if you like, a verse-making competition ! God's judgment will reveal itself in any or all. Make your own choice ! Speak, you hapless wretch, unless you want . . .

Faust

Gently, my bully, gently ! By heaven, were you not so pleasing to me I should have to be angry with you.

Master William, the women have been telling you tales. But here you have the Prince declaring on his word of honour that he does not even remember the girl. Do you attach more credence to market gossip?

Hans.

Often I've seen him looking at Truda!

Gabriel

In a word, this matter must be investigated. And, as the Duke himself, being father of the defendant and human like the rest of us, cannot be impartial, therefore . . .

Faust [rising]

Enough, enough of this, Gabriel! I have already heard too much. This scene is becoming undignified. I am the sovereign and creator of this land, I may say, out of nothingness. You have come here to live and work on it, as subjects of my sceptre. [*More calmly.*] The girl shall be found. Baron Mephisto, to-morrow she is to be at her parents' home. To-morrow! You hear me? I know you can manage to find her. No quibbles! I command you finally and definitely: to-morrow she is to be at her home. The culprit shall be severely punished, whoever he be.

[*He rises with the intention of departing*]

Gabriel

Even if it were your son—and Baron Mephisto?

Faust [reflects a moment; then in an impressive voice]

What hateful suspicion! No! Baron, you are, in a word, to clear up this matter to the general satisfaction. Now, children, go! [*He smiles.*] What a trouble a father has with his thousands of children! And the ages are watching, the ages are waiting, and the years are passing—and none too many are left for Faust. Go, then, go!

[*They all leave by the lower door. Faust and Mephisto are left alone.*]

Faust

Faustina! Call Faustina here!

[*Faustina enters that instant.*]

Let me lean on your shoulder and go. You shall read me some Cervantes for an hour. And then I will look at the precious drawings of the great Leonardo. What have you been doing all this while?

Faustina

Count Arthur was with me the whole time. He says he has an important matter to discuss with you, about which he has already written.

Faust

Ah, I am glad of it—I am glad! You may go, Baron; and remember my inexorable command.

[*Mephisto goes out.*]

Faust [*sitting down again*]

He has matters to discuss with me? Why do you blush, you pale snow-white lily? Thanks be to nature for bestowing on me one pleasant moment after these miserable hours. This one shall be marked with a white stone. Call Arthur in here; call this astrologer and alchemist, this crank whom his very relatives will not acknowledge. And my little girl, smile! You won't? Well, then, go—go and send him here at once.

[*Faustina goes out.*]

Faust [*alone*]

He is not like his ancestors. The Counts Von Stern were all men of blood and iron. So, too, was his brother Siegmund. But this younger son, not being expected to rule, was brought up in seclusion, in the shadow of the lofty night-cap of Dr. Aegyptus; and on the death of his brother the boy succeeded to his father's title, as simple as he is learned. And glory be to Fate that I have hit upon such a man in this thick forest around us, amid the roaring heraldic beasts of our

neighbouring nobility! He has a gentle heart—a poet's heart. Where else could I have found such a husband for poor little Faustina?

[*Enter Arthur, young, handsome, frail-looking and very pale, dressed entirely in black. A complex amulet hangs by a golden chain on his chest.*]

Faust

Come and sit near me, Count Stern.

[*Arthur bows and seats himself.*]

Faust

I have read the horoscopes, and your wonderful astrological calculations. Yes, yes, Jupiter and Venus tell us just what we want, my young friend. I believe them! You and Faustina are predestined mates. As far as I can see, the planets have been good matchmakers.

Arthur

Did you observe Duke, that in this instance, I have applied a method which has never been set forth in literature and is scarcely known at the present time? I have no faith in written documents. The great alchemists and astrologers did not entrust to letters of the alphabet the real fruits of their deep reflections and indefatigable work, even when they sheltered themselves behind mysterious devices and symbols. These works were buried with themselves. In very truth, these are occult sciences. Thus, the so-called Treatise of Hermes, the thrice-greatest master, is an impudent forgery. A fact, I assure you, Duke! But the oral teachings of this semi-divine intellect, handed down from disciple to disciple, did in part reach my great spiritual father, Doctor Aegyptus. From him I learned many hidden truths, but I am bound to keep the secret until I am forty-five years of age, and only then may I transmit my knowledge to one disciple of mine, under the same oath.

Faust

But you love Faustina?

Arthur

Hardly had I apprehended in my heart a sweet travail, begotten through the testimony of the crystal in my eyes, than I opined between me and her a kinship. My calculations proved to me that I was not in error. This much I may tell you, Duke. Her number is nine. A splendid number! Her word is PANSAMITKSIX-ADIR.* A remarkable word! And my number is three. Now you understand? And my word is KADIMIKSAPIKSIR.*

Faust

Good! Good! But now we will call Faustina, shall we, my dear fellow? And don't talk astrology to her,—talk of nothing but love, and in words less arduous than those occult terms over which you slide so smoothly.

[*He claps his hands. The Secretary at once appears.*]

Faust

Ask my daughter to come here, my good man.

Arthur

But I surmise that the princess will take some interest in astrology. For in it are combined profound wisdom, incomparable utility, and exalted beauty. As for alchemy, another region in my sphere of knowledge, experiments in it, I admit, are not always quite devoid of danger. It may happen that the alchemist receives vapours which are hostile to human breath. . . . And, quite recently, one combination of the elements, which I am bound to keep secret, progressed with such an excess of energy that the expanding air hurled me six ells away, and I was sore wounded in that portion of my head were is situated the bump of industry.

Faust [*smiling all the time*]

You must take care of yourself, Count. Do not make yourself a martyr to excessive love of knowledge. Here is my daughter. . . . Ah, my child!

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* Or, in English: TASHEECLELSDIROY and LIGLESHIVJESHOY.

[*Faustina comes in.*]

Faust

Now, speak to her.

Arthur [*rising and bowing low*]

Princess! By the will of those lustrous orbs that circle as celestial beacons,—by the will of the constituent elements of our bodies, and of our animal and also our rational souls,—by the will of your father, the wisest of princes,—we unite with you for love, spiritual and carnal, and for the procreation of the lineage of the Sterns, whence one day will issue a man who will be crowned Emperor with the Imperial Diadem. This is as certain as the intersection of two lines concurrent on one plane and not parallel. Here is my hand, dear Princess! On it you will easily read the clear demarcation of longevity, the lines denoting the fruitfulness of our marriage, and a whole tracery forecasting a tranquil life for us. Princess, give me your desired hand.

[*Faustina bursts into sobs and falls on Faust's neck*]

Faust

My child! my child! These tears—are they for happiness? Leave us a while, Count Arthur.

[*Count Stern bows and retires in some confusion*]

Faust

Now, tell me—tell me, my child, the reason for these sudden tears.

[*Faustina raises her head, tries to say something, but cannot speak, sighs deeply, and again hides her face on his breast.*]

Faust

Does he not please you? Is he not handsome and young, and kind and noble? He is strange, that is true; but not stupid. No, no, Faustina, he is no fool, even if his manner of speech is too unusual for you. Calm yourself, my joy! He will make an excellent husband. All the others whom I have considered are such rough loons, that I could not bring myself to

commit your youth to their care Don't cry, don't cry, Faustina ! Come to your own room.

[*He gently leads her away*]

[*Mephisto comes in by the lower door He pretends to be seeking something among the books on the table, but watches the door as though expecting someone*]

Mephisto

Ah, here comes our faithful fledgeling !

[*Faustulus enters, evidently disturbed, and quickly approaches Mephisto*]

Faustulus

I was looking for you

Mephisto

At your service, Prince

[*Faustulus leans on the back of a chair with one hand, covering his eyes with the other*]

Faustulus [*in a low voice*]

What humiliation !

Mephisto [*taking his hand and pressing it to his breast*]

Take courage, Prince

Faustulus [*standing erect with glistening eyes*]

Yes, a Prince ! Prince in every inch of my body, and in a soul overflowing with the princely pride of being a grandson of the King of Spain ! Was not my mother the Infanta ? True, my father was once a mere Knight, but his great services to the empire earned him the ducal title over all his domains, won by him from King Neptune But I have reason to believe that my race springs from the illustrious Roman patrician, Faustus,—which means Fortunate, and has nothing to do with the vulgar word *faust*, German for fist Be that as it may, never will I suffer anyone [*in a high scream, stamping his feet*]—anyone—to impugn my dignity as a Prince !

Mephisto

I should like to see such a braggart-fool!

Faustulus

But meanwhile [*flinging himself into an armchair*] what does my father subject me to? What language those vile brigands used!

Mephisto

Monstrous!

Faustulus

Insufferable, disgusting, Baron!

Mephisto [*sighing*]

Most painful!

Faustulus

The laws of man and God trampled on! [*With a bitter smile.*] But does my father believe in God? Could he then respect this everlasting scum of society? He loves playing the democrat—*novus homo*—folly that brought my mother to her grave, the most noble Duchess Elvira. [*He broods awhile.*]

Mephisto [*quietly and cautiously, shaking his head*]

Yet it still may be, Prince. . . . If we only have patience!

Faustulus

You expect more trouble, Baron?

Mephisto

I do not refer to the girl. I promised you I would put that straight and I will keep my word.

Faustulus

I am very worried about it. But I have every confidence in you. Only—I see a wrinkle of perplexity on my wise friend's brow. . . .

Mephisto [*solemnly*]

I was thinking of your future, Prince. Dear Prince, not long before your sainted mother departed for another world, where, as I am convinced, she has become the favourite lady-in-waiting at the dazzling Court of the Queen of Heaven,—yes, it was in her last hours that your pious mother squeezed my hands in those hot dry hands of hers, and, darting at me a feverish look of appeal, whispered to me with her parched lips: "Oh, keep watch over my son,—keep watch over his crown! That fool will bring everything to ruin. He is a heretic; he has sold his soul to Satan; he is only a guest at life's table, playing with all things and all men as his toys. Once I even dreamed"—so did your dying mother confide to me in her agony—"that my husband sat on his cloak, whistled, and flew out of the window!" That is what your poor mother said, the late Duchess Elvira, who—may her memory be for ever blessed!—was a true friend of mine. [*He sighs deeply; Faustulus wipes his eyes with a lace handkerchief.*] I do all I can. I do not sleep. I do not swallow one crumb at my ease. . . . But what can I do? The rabble has been let loose. The Duke, I know, will assent to the election of Tribunes, and that will be the beginning of the end; from that point it will be a rapid fall. And who can tell what terrors may accompany the revolution? The Duke pays no heed to anything of this sort. He is such a great man, you see, that everything else looks small to him, beneath notice. Oh, forgive me, Prince! Let not your loving filial heart be disturbed within you; but I will disclose my innermost thought. Henry Faust once was a great man. He was . . . was!

Faustulus [*terrified*]

What do you mean?

Mephisto

In his stead there sits now on the throne of the Duchy of Wellentrotz and Trotzburg, an old man, almost a dotard.

Faustulus

Can this be ?

Mephisto

That is the bitter truth, Greatness has dazzled him. He is enamoured of himself, like a new Narcissus ; and this unending self-worship has turned his brain. A Narcissus, without hair on his temple, grey, doddering—and in love with his own beauty ! And all this while I know another giant, whom these pitiful fragments of former greatness hold down.

Faustulus

Who is that ?

Mephisto

Prince, it is you ! [*In a prophetic tone.*] Make ready ! Soon will a secret voice speak in your ears and say : " Arise, oh son of Spain, arise for a mighty feat ; gaze on your star with unfaltering eyes, and go forth, spare no one ; for you are born to accomplish great things ; you will found a mighty kingdom ! "

Faustulus

I already often hear such voices. [*Stares in front of him fixedly.*] And I am a-feared.

Mephisto

Dare to be bold !

[*Claps his hands. A servant enters.*]

Come, drink a glass of Syracusan with me, my boy ! Believe me, my darling, I am your support ; have no fear ! Meanwhile, swallow these petty rebuffs. Oh, what a reckoning we will have one day with all these Scotts and Hans's !

Faustulus

Ah—that we will !

Mephisto

They will crawl on their stomachs to the throne of King Faustulus !

[*Faustulus laughs and rubs his hands.*]

They will be happy to the verge of madness if the King shall beckon to them with his finger and say, "Your wife—or daughter, or sister, as it may be—is pleasing in my eyes; go and speak with my equerry!"

Faustulus

And I shall marry Dona Inez. Royal blood flows in her veins; she is pretty, serious, educated and stern. . . . Oh, we shall introduce an almost religious etiquette at Court.

Mephisto [*craftily*]

And all the more delightful will it be after midnight, when Queen Inez has been conducted to her apartments by six ladies-in-waiting, for you to remain in a cosy room with a glass of Syracusan at your side, and listen to ribald songs from rosy lips, to banter some frightened little bourgeois virtue, or experiment on Eastern beauty.

Faustulus

How I love you, Baron! You might be my father!

Mephisto [*frowning*]

Don't talk like that, my Faustulus. You do not know what sore spot in my soul you are chafing. Oh, Dona Elvira, Dona Elvira!—mistress!—Beatrice of my poor heart. . . . Ah, here comes the wine! Let us enliven ourselves a little and take heart of mirth.

[*The servant places the wine and glasses on the table. Mephisto pours a thick liquid into the cut glass, dismisses the servant with a nod, and with a playful gesture invites Faustulus.*]

Faustulus [*timidly*]

Won't father be coming in?

Mephisto

No, he will not. [*They drink.*] Now, a word about your little girl. Are you very much in love with her?

Faustulus

Madly! That's the trouble; a very sea of motley passions seethes in my breast!

[*He strikes his narrow chest with his hand.*]

Mephisto

A foretokening that the eaglet's wings are growing! I toast the slender waist and luscious bosom of Mademoiselle Ortruda!

Faustulus

To my success!—Is she in Wotusberg?

Mephisto

Yes, as we arranged. Still, some dexterity will be needed. You see, though my men seized this little burgher Amazon quite unawares and succeeded in hauling her out of bed with nothing more than a night-gown on her, all the same she happened to be armed, to be wearing on her breast a splendid Toledan stiletto in a little scabbard—and very sharp. Though the blade was only a few inches long, it could scratch anyone to death. No sooner was she unloosed than she leapt into the corner like a little tigress, and cried out: "If anyone touches me I will plunge this little toy into my heart!"

Faustulus [*nervously*]

And—she might really do it?

Mephisto

She might. Hers is a churlish nature. She is so full of blood and vigour that death does not seem at all terrifying to her. Such creatures kill themselves with a smile half-curious, half-gay, just as if their childish suicide were a triumph of life, and not of death. They are utterly unlike persons of refined and cultured temperament, such as yours, who realise the value of life, grip it tight, and would rather submit to any contumely than part company with sweet life, even if it has become nothing more than one continuous foul disease. That lofty aristocratic love of life is quite alien to these coarser fibres which are so very near to nature.

Faustulus

But then, I fear,—

Mephisto

Fear nothing! I tell you, you are the Prince, a sensible fellow, and a pretty fellow. Ortruda is a free, passionate, and even voluptuous girl. Can she hold out against you? Only don't try to win anything by force! I will put things straight with your father. Very soon the bolts of his anger will find other pinnacles to lay low. Drink, Faustulus, son of my soul!

Faustulus

To all of your schemes, my great friend!

Mephisto [*affectionately stroking his cheek*]

My boy, what shall we not be able to make of you! I am so much more at ease with you than with the old man. In you there pulses the fiery blood of the royal house, the heritage of generations of noble infirmities. However, two glasses of wine in that slush which flows in your veins, work destructively. Your nose already looks like a Greek fig, your eyes like pewter buttons. You are pretty, my boy! [*He laughs raucously.*]

Faustulus [*laughing and lunging out at him*]

A jester. . . .

Mephisto

Why shouldn't I be your jester?

[*Faustina enters and stands astounded.*]

Faustina

What is going on here?

[*She meets Mephisto's glance, is confused, and lowers her eyes.*]

Faustina

Father had forgotten his Romance of Don Quixote. . . . I came to get it for him. . . . [*She is going, but suddenly turns round decisively.*] Faustulus, do not anger your father!

Mephisto [*who has been following her all the time jeeringly*]

Do you yourself, Princess, take care not to anger him, when Gabriel starts gadding about with a girl! You understand?

Faustina [*looking at him with horror and disgust*]

What do you mean by this?

Mephisto

Oh, you understand me, Princess!

Faustina

You are drunk, my lord.

Mephisto

His Highness will be very angry indeed. You are Count Stern's bride. His Highness has already decided that. Then, all at once. . . . Fie! fie! How ugly it looks! And such a modest little maiden!

Faustulus [*hiccoughing*]

My sister is a . . . a little noodle!

Mephisto

Go to sleep, Prince!—But you, go to your father, to your father! You must be more gentle with him. For you, the sweetest of all daughters, are preparing to stab him to the heart. All you need do is to reveal to him the secret of your love—yes, only that!—and the poor old man will be killed!

[*Faustina says nothing, but her head droops to her bosom. Mephisto crosses his arms and glares at her triumphantly. Faustulus spills the wine on the edge of his glass, and grunts.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

[*Early morning. A small room austerely and simply furnished. A faint light comes through the window. A writing desk with papers and drawings in orderly arrangement. Bookshelves. A large portrait of Faust. Someone knocks at the outer door. Gabriel comes from his bedroom opposite, without coat or waistcoat.*]

Gabriel

Who is there? [*Opens the door.*]

Pieter [*rushing in*]

Master! Such doings! The devil only knows what is going on in Trotzburg to-night—and you in bed!

Gabriel

What is it? What is it, Pieter? Don't talk while you're out of breath. Sit down and take your time.

Pieter

Don't talk? Now is the time to talk! Good or bad news, I don't know which! Phew!

Gabriel

Just take your time and speak clearly!

Pieter

The City's up in arms!

Gabriel

In arms?

Pieter

Yes, our oppressors have lived to see it! Listen, master! Last night, they say, Big Hans had assembled a gang of rowdy 'prentices at the Applegarden. He wanted to plan an attack on Faustulus at Villa Corona, to rescue Ortruda. They knew she was there. It was a regular row, that meeting. That ragged old man and his wife who have been stirring up feeling against the rich and the government—they were there. He was shouting even louder than Hans. Then, all at once, who enters the tavern but Ortruda herself! They were dumb-

founded! Then she told her story. All our suspicions were correct; if was Faustulus had carried her off; but she had defended herself like a tigress. Oh, our Ortrud is no timid one! I can see that boy Faustulus facing her claws! Yes, she had been threatened and cajoled, and then, in the night, Alguacil Mephisto came to her and suggested she should escape. He said he didn't want to be between two fires—the son and the father, so he had decided to help her to escape. But it wasn't in gratitude she told them! Her return, so far from calming them, threw oil on the fire. Some of them were going off to get muskets and hawberks and torches, when—another surprise!—the whole of the inn was found to be surrounded by lancers of the Swiss Regiment! Faustulus had openly and insolently come to recapture Ortruda. Then even the timid fell into line. Old Rebble pulled out a poniard from his pocket and shouted: "Let us die rather than show ourselves cowardly curs!" But our fellows had very few weapons. Then Hans, who as you know, had been harping on his idea of single combat, ran out into the courtyard, brandishing his sword, and shouted: "Faustulus, if you have in your blood one drop of manhood, come and fight me!" Faustulus was just riding up. He answered: "At your service,"—pulled out his pistol, and before you had time to draw breath, fired, and Hans fell—dead. "Cut this rabble down!" Faustulus ordered. There were a whole lot of the Switzers. They had pikes and sabres. It was a butchery! The news spread over the town. As soon as I heard it, I ran with all my 'prentices to the Apple-garden. The inn was on fire; we could hear the clang of steel and occasional shots. Did you hear nothing? The tocsin was rung from St. George's.

Gabriel

I worked late last night and slept very heavily; yet, somehow, something did disturb my dreams.

Pieter

Within an hour the Switzers themselves were surrounded by the 'prentice bands, Mijnheer Scott in command.

Gabriel

Ah. . . . he!

Pieter

Then Baron Mephisto appeared, delivered a speech, and led the lancers off with more threats. That's all I know. The master-craftsmen are assembling at the Town Hall. The merchants are also meeting at the Golden House. All the 'prentices are in arms.

[*Gabriel is silent, thinking.*]

I was sent, Mijnheer Gabriel, to ask you to come at once to the Town Hall.

Gabriel

The Duke will punish the guilty. . . . I thought the Duke had settled the whole affair. Yes, but would the City now be satisfied with a formal punishment of Faustulus? To chastise one's own son . . . when circumstances demand, as the elder Brutus did of old. . . . This conflict of authority is most inopportune.

[*The door is flung open. Scott enters hurriedly. He wears steel armour and a helmet, top boots and spurs.*]

Gabriel

You, here? But, Pieter. . . . You had better go downstairs, Pieter.

[*Pieter goes out.*]

Scott

Friend, it is accomplished! The City is up in arms! The vileness of the son outweighs the merits of the father, overshadowed as those were by his pigheadedness. This is the end of ducal authority!

Gabriel

I know that civil war has blazed up, but I do not know why you are so confident of victory. There are the seven thousand lancers or more in the City, the artillery at the Fortress of Sant' Angelo, and the countless agents of Baron Mephisto. . . .

Scott

Early this morning I captured the Fortress of Sant' Angelo and the cannon, and had nearly seized the treasury,—and then I should have bribed the lancers into neutrality. The whole people is raging; everyone is in arms. Thousands of men, and even a few women, are assembled in front of the Cathedral. Against Trotzburg in arms the Lancers are a mere handful.

Gabriel

Certainly from a military point of view you have acted wisely. But need we, perhaps, have gone to such lengths?

Scott

First and foremost, we must have our adversary on his knees, before we begin parleying.

Gabriel

You are very far from that. The Duke with his foreign connections can very easily raise against us a host of enemies, and besiege Trotzburg with the troops of neighbouring princes. And, inside the City, what will be happening? The 'prentices will demand an instant fulfilment of their Labour Charter, the masters will be obdurate, and . . .

Scott

In view of the military danger, the 'prentices will give way. When danger threatens all alike, the lower classes always give way to the upper.

Gabriel

And even if discontent with the merchants comes to a head, will it be so serious? Those profiteers take all the pickings—the people demand their expulsion—very well, as long as there is no pilfering of the warehouses. On the other hand, the merchants, if they remove their ships and their goods and cut off our trade, will very soon bring Trotzburg into a parlous plight. The Dukedom of Trotzburg is not self-supporting. I foresee many other difficulties. And at such a time, to have

no Faust! . . . He is arrogant in his genius, his schemes are often laborious, even impracticable, and it isn't always smooth sailing with the people; but who can deny the wisdom of this sovereign? And, if you come to that, is there any other city in the world as prosperous as Trotzburg?

Scott

These are quite inopportune reflections!

Gabriel

On the contrary. There is only one way out—to come to terms with Faust.

Scott

We must come to terms with the Golden House. The merchants will pay a higher trade tax, somewhat reduce the rate of interest, and lower the price of imports, especially of bread. I have always explained to them that they had better diminish their prodigious profits by a fifth rather than risk losing everything in an insurrection—and all the trade of Trotzburg for years to come. And after some years, I told them, Trotzburg would be able to manage its own mercantile fleet. It is with this threat of a fleet of its own, belonging to Trotzburg, that Faust has been able to keep them in bounds. We can do the same.

Gabriel

Friend, Faust's threats were hallucinations, but he had more credence than we could ever command. You will find it easy to lower the price of bread. But, once the people is master, the merchants will hardly manage to escape with whole skins by surrendering let alone one-fifth but four-fifths of their income.

Scott

I undertake to convince the 'prentices. I repeat, the common danger of war is a powerful factor. We must be gentle with the merchants, stand by the master-craftsmen, and keep the 'prentices with us; but, as to mutineers with no fixed occupations—we must simply

arrest them. I shall easily find a pretext for imprisoning old Rebble and his band of gypsies, scavengers, and seamen. And Hans—he was my brother-in-law, but—speaking as a politician—his death very greatly facilitates our task. The City must become a Republic, but of course in a time of such general danger we must have persons of authority in command.

Gabriel

Perhaps only one ?

Scott

We will compromise on two Tribunes. . . . Hans, though the idol of the craftsmen, would by now have been superfluous.

Gabriel

Scott, do you really think you are speaking like a politician ? Do not confuse wisdom with wiliness, courage with foolhardiness, idealism with ambition. Let us go to the Town Hall, and send a delegation to Faust with a petition to him to remain in the City as ruler, but to limit his power by submitting it to the control of a popular assembly, the decisions of which shall be reported to him by two Tribunes. Then we shall settle all current questions, from the punishment of Faustulus down to the demands of the poeple, without any great a-do. The authority of the Duke will cover us all.

Scott

Oh ! You and Faust—you will come to an agreement ? Authority ? Yes ! And, on the other hand, leniency and caution ? And—Faust is generous and pliable ! Oh, the two of you !

Gabriel

William Scott, here is my hand. You are esteemed for your sense, your resolution, your eloquence. I also esteem you. Will you take part in this triumvirate, which will be a transitional stage to a greater degree of popular sovereignty ? If so, shake hands. But your scheme—it is not acceptable to me. You would rely

on the merchants, you would build up a militia faithful to you and in your pay, and become dictator in the Duke's stead—that is your scheme. I should fight against it. I do not want to exchange Faust for you. Trotzburg would never agree to it; possibly the merchants and the rich guilds might, because they would see in it a chance for their own predominance. We understand each other. Your hand, then,—or do we fight?

Scott

Why such suspicions? I am just as good a republican and democrat as you. And, furthermore, how could I fight you? Does not the whole people regard you as an upright man? If you withdraw your hand from mine, who will not do likewise?

Gabriel

Neither I, nor you, nor even the great Faust himself, is what matters now. Trotzburg alone matters. Trotzburg must be the pioneer of the new State, a great brotherhood of the workers. A sublime ideal, hard of attainment, needing time and caution to be realised. It would be a crime should we now by any blunder narrow or obscure the horizon. But, my friend, caution does not mean submitting the power of the City to a golden oligarchy. Or do you think that we have no choice between a dummy despot and a sack of gold? Were it so, I should not hesitate. Were there no other alternative, anything were better than a monarchy. But this Faust is no mere monarch, no mere crowned head; he is of all men the greatest and most enlightened, and one who loves us. The crown here is but an impediment. His power—it is the power of genius. Now, we are faced with this problem: we do not want this power, because we want freedom. Freedom is greater than Faust. But, to exchange Faust for Isaac Segal, or Justus Pfefferschalk, or for a council of fat-bellied masters of rich guilds—no, I had rather die than suffer that. Trotzburg free—that or nothing! And I see in the future this free Trotzburg, her freedom served also by her father—Faust.

Scott

You shall be the speaker at the Town Hall, and to the people. I will be silent.

Gabriel

Your hand!

[*He presses Scott's hand and smiles happily. Scott remains cold.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE III

[*The Fountain Square. On one side, the Masons' Guildhall, a grey, late-Gothic building, with a tower in the centre. On the opposite side of the square, the State Treasury, guarded by four militia-men wearing casques, and carrying arquebuses, marching to and fro slowly along a vaulted gallery. The edifice is ponderous in style, built of dark stone, with grated windows. At the far end of the Square, a Gothic Church with belfry. In the centre of the Square a large fountain, representing Fortune with a cornucopia, out of which a stream of water gushes in fan shape into a wide basin, the sides of which are covered with allegorical reliefs. The fountain stands on a broad square platform with seven granite steps leading up to it.*

The Square is crowded with the people in arms. Apprentices of various guilds mix with them. There are a fair number of women, some of them also armed. Children are pushing through the crowd. There is a hum of voices, a distant beating of drums, and through it all an agitated tolling of bells from the belfry. The Town-crier mounts the platform of the fountain; he is dressed in black, with the arms of Trotzburg—an ocean wave breaking against a tower—embroidered on his breast.]

Town-Crier

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[*Scott comes in and waves his hat in command. Four masons bring in the body of Hans, wrapped in a black cloak, on a ladder as a stretcher, set it over against the steps, and take the cap off the head, exposing the blood-stained face. There is a stir in the crowd, followed by a dead silence.*]

Scott [*speaking very loudly*]

Citizens of Trotzburg, most mighty Guilds, rescuers of this land from the sea, and founders in a quarter of a century of a city which is the admiration of the world! The son of the Duke of this land, Prince Faustulus, abducted the sister of our dear friend Hans and daughter of the old master Wahrhaft—he who laid the first stones of our Cathedral and Town Hall. When the girl escaped from him, the prince pursued her with his company of mercenaries and assassins, and killed her brother who was defending her.

[*A great sensation in the crowd, and then another silence as of the grave.*]

We are going to demand a trial of the murderer. But who shall be his judge? His friend and debaucher, our monstrous Alguacil, the abomination of our land? Or his deputy, Judge van der Hoog, a stupid pedant and faithful lapdog of any tyrant? Or the Duke? But the Duke is his father. Our institutions and customs in this city are much belauded. They are better than those of our neighbours; but how many insults remain unavenged, how many acts of oppression unredressed, how many petitions unheard! We honour the Duke, but let him honour us! He built Trotzburg—and we also built Trotzburg! In this at least we are equal. Yet he commits us to the charge of his deputies, as though we were senseless animals.

[*A roar of applause follows these last words.*]

Faust is wise; the Guilds are also wise! And they wish to become as illustrious, free, and rich as Faust himself! How often has this been discussed! How often have the Guilds agitated for two Tribunes, to be elected by all the working people who built this country and this City—Tribunes co-regent with the Duke, and strictly subordinate to the Popular Assembly. This has long been our aspiration; the City carries it under its heart, as a mother carries her child. But our child is denied the right of birth. The Duke insists upon being sole despot. But we have grown up; we know our rights, we know our power; and we declare—we, Great Trotzburg—that, after the events of last night, we can no longer consent to be thus governed.

[*A storm of applause.*]

The Crowd

Great Trotzburg! Long live the Workers! Trotzburg!

[*Banners are waved, drums beaten, trumpets sounded.*]

Town-Crier

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

Hunt [*standing by Scott*]

Listen mighty people, your dawn is at hand!

[*The crowd stirs with emotion.*]

Scott

If he who is wise and good thus afflict us, how shall we fare under his successor? Do you not see how the Alguacil is preparing for us fetters and slavery?

The Crowd

Down with him!—He is the devil himself, and everybody knows it!—Down with Baron Mephisto!

[*A loud hissing and booing from all parts.*]

Scott

Citizens, without waiting for anyone or anything, let us at once elect two Tribunes, and send them to the Duke Faust, as his peers, to discuss with him our troubles and our rights. Great Trotzburg will speak through their mouths with its first citizen, and not as a slave to his master.

[*Exclamations of joy and pride.*]

The Crowd

Yes, yes! Bravo, William Scott! Long live the Tribunes!

Scott

Citizens, we have already consulted at the Town Hall with the assembly of Masters. As the Master of the Free Masons, whom you all esteem, Gabriel van Bond, told us there, the Masters now suggest that you should elect him and myself as Tribunes. Do you approve?

The Crowd

Yes, yes! Hurrah for Scott! Hurrah for Van der Bond!

[*The shouting continues for some time.*]

Scott

Do you all agree to these names, William Scott and Gabriel van der Bond, free citizens?

[*Loud applause.*]

The Crowd

Agreed ! agreed !

Rebble [*pushing forward and standing on a low step of the fountain*]

I demand to speak !

Scott

Are you a citizen ?

Rebble

A citizen of the world ! I demand to speak ! [*He mounts two steps higher.*[Trotzburg, oh city of my heart, my beloved people, you have awakened ! Act now, promptly, unhesitatingly, ruthlessly ! It is yet morning. By midday be there not left alive one rich man, not one fat-paunch with unslit gullet ! Carry their furniture out into the square, their heaped up piles of gold, and let these two Tribunes assign to every man an equal portion. And go—seize Faustulus, and hand him over to me ! I will make you laugh ! But the old man, set him backward on an ass, and let him go seek other fools like unto him for his lacqueys. . . .

[*Vague murmurs in the crowd. Waves moving irregularly and spreading disorderly. The rhythm is broken.*]

Scott [*decisively*]

Enough of this ! Comrades,—workers, we have no time to listen to the evil chatter of this dotard.

Rebble [*not understanding*]

What was that ?

Scott

Go away, go away, old man ! We have to build up our cause, not destroy it. Nobody here will listen to you. We are not brute-beasts just unmanacled, but men who proudly and boldly establish their freedom.

[*Murmurs of applause, the waves beginning at the fountain and extending over the whole Square concentrically.*]

Rebble [*confused*]

What is that song ?

[*Gabriel mounts the steps, gently takes him by the shoulder and leads him away from the stretcher.*]

Envie [*in the front rank, waving her rags and shrieking*]

People, oh people ! Behold how these sage masters of yours would steal the people's fortune. Once the hour of freedom has struck, once the soldiery has failed, let everyone take what he can from the rich ! Each man's takings are his for this once ! Isn't that right, brothers and sisters ?

Gabriel [*calmly*]

Do not disturb us, do not disturb us, old woman ! Pieter, just take her a little aside.

Scott

Citizens, each to his Guild ! Remain under arms ! The military command I take upon myself. Comrades, for to-day obey the orders of the authorities you have elected—to-morrow you shall order them—to be beheaded, if that be our desert.

[*Loud applause, which becomes sustained in a solemn spirit of resolve. All begin to go out in orderly fashion, as though their duties were self-evident. Serious looks everywhere, knitted brows, and hands that grip the weapons tightly.*]

Hunt

Listen, ye people ! [*He beats a drum, and then declaims in a loud voice*]

Our sovereign city, roused in might,
In Titan strength to reign,—
King Trotzburg in the morning light
Shall throne it o'er the plain !

Before his power the waves have fled
That made his native land,
And magical on that sea-bed
His palaces now stand.

Now Freedom stirs his giant mind
In all its thousand heads,
And Unity, all hearts to bind
With ever-living threads.

And he shall tell the Duke: Still lead,—
First citizen thereby;
Be first among your peers indeed,
But sovereign—that am I!
I, one and all, I breathe in all,
In all I toil, I sing.

Feel you my strength? In thunder-call
Hear you my laughter ring?
Strange, wonderful, no dream it is—
To power the Titan grown!
King Trotzburg, o'er this land of his,
Now rears his royal throne.

Oh, louder, prouder ring my voice!
Full rapture hear me sing
And in thy golden dawn rejoice,
Trotzburg, my Titan-King!

To arms, citizens! To arms! Either he is born, to-day, your fiery giant, who lives in each of you, eternal and victorious, or this dream shall pass away—holy, marvellous and terrible as it is! City, my City, glory to thee! In thy honour thy drummer, Gunther Hunt, beats his drum!

[*He beats the drum with all his might. A beating of drums answers him from many sides. A thunderous chorus of voices chant the song.*]

Our sovereign city, roused in might,
In Titan strength to reign,—
King Trotzburg in the morning light
Shall throne it o'er the plain!

[*Faces are radiant; the ocean of heads moves in rhythmic waves; eyes in excitement look straight ahead; some men embrace. The drums roll and the song echoes harmoniously.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

[*The orangery in Faust's palace, full of orange trees and palms. It is a hot summer day. The broad windows are wide open. A big cockatoo and two bright coloured parrots are squawking and turning somersaults. Other rare birds. Under the palms, on a semi-circular marble bench of classical style, Faust, in a long velvet cloak with a gold belt, sits reading, holding a little book with a printed leather cover at a great distance from his long-sighted eyes. At his feet lies a snow-white greyhound.*

Faustina enters, wearing a long white dress, her hair down and clasped in a little pearl brooch. She is carrying a silver tray with a golden goblet filled with a cooling draught.]

Faust

Just listen to this, my little girl:

> Ed era il cielo all' armonia si intento
> Che non si vedea in ramo mover foglia,
> Tanta dolcezza avean pien l'aere e 'l vento.

And to the harmony heaven so intent was that no leaf there rustled on its bough, so full the air and wind of sweetest scent.

[*He drinks from the goblet.*]

Thus do I, giving you in marriage, return to Petrarch. Well, I too have loved. [*A moment's pause.*] But when I loved I did not read Petrarch. I did not even write sonnets. Passion welled up and boiled over in me, and could not mould itself into beautiful form. . . . Come and sit beside me, my young delight.

[*Faustina sits down beside him.*]

But, now, in this wonderful summer, on these plains thick-set with poplars, in the park of the Falcon Tower, among its fountains, in the Palace garden with its statues, and here in these enchanting tents of the distant sultry South, I dream of love as of a distant shore. No, not for myself. . . . After hard thinking over plans and designs, after rigorous work at my man of iron, whenever I want to rest I think of you, your youth and beauty, the sensations awaiting you so

utterly strange and fresh and unexpected; and then the sensuous stanzas of Petrarch come back to me, rising up as from the depths of my memory. When I am weary but with you, I live again in dreams the days of my love, just as I hope to live yet again with your children in those golden clouds that are the happy season of life, sweet childhood.

[*He strokes her bowed head.*]

But you, Faustina? You do not look as though you were in love. On the contrary, I read some hidden trouble in your eyes. Come, you know you will still be with me. Count Stern has taken up his residence in my palace. And I, always ready to build, am planning a great reconstruction. I will build you a sweet little nest near to me. We shall not be parted. [*A pause.*] One moment more of peace. Then, back to my workshop. . . . Ah, my iron man, somehow I fancy I have found you a soul!

[*He closes his eyes and rests his head on the lofty marble back of the bench. Faustina looks at him with tears in her eyes, then impulsively kisses him on his forehead and hand.*]

Faust [*opening his eyes and smiling*]

What a violent young thing!

Faustina

Oh, my father, the great Faust!

Faust

My child, what I have accomplished so far is but little. Don't you be echoing the flatterers with your "great Faust." I must go on—go forward to the end. Do you know, child, that I am often deeply grieved?

Faustina

Father!

Faust

Yes, yes,—deeply grieved! I have built much, I am still building, and I shall go on building. But I am concerned that those who help me, and bear on their

shoulders the most ungracious and burdensome part of the work, should be—well, more or less comfortable and contented. But they are so poor, so submissive; and they age so early. I have reduced the hours of labour; they now only work nine hours a day—I have instituted two shifts; even this is arduous enough. And I pay them well. But can I make them rich? Can they travel, broaden their minds by reading and art? Can they educate their children as I have you? Can I give them those myriad things they call luxury? And yet, to my mind, every real man must have luxury as the air he breathes. No, I cannot do these things! To bring this about I should have to compel by force or by alchemist's gold all the rest of the world to support my city with tribute of labour. Or else, to render the labour here less arduous, so that they themselves should produce a hundredfold more. We are poor, Faustina, we are poor! We have to work too hard, too coarsely, at labour too servile and too harsh! Whereas every man was born to be a creator, a happy master and lord.

That kindly rogue, that sea-wolf with a heart of marble, suggests that we should erect our white man's paradise on the bowed backs of negroes. Think of it! We are to live in brilliant halls replete with cheer and creativeness and the glitter of mental attainments. Yes,—but go down to the cellars and you are in Hell, where men, gnashing their teeth, obey the orders of men, and perish with rotting muscles, broken limbs, ruptured veins, pounded to death against the iron resistance of matter! Horrible! Even the animals, even the beasts, Faustina, I would not imprison down in that hole forever. Faustina, they say I am cruel. . . . Yes, yes, I know they say I am cruel,—for instance, in the matter of draining that marsh, where fever slays its legions. But, in spite of that, I have a tender heart. I sometimes dream of a little ass, a patient little martyr-ass, prematurely old and disconsolate through bearing burdens beyond its strength. And the little ass looks at me in mute reproach. "*All beings thirst for redemption*," said the sage of Tarsus.

Yet, truly, this weakness of mine would be con-

temptible, and my Viking Niklaas would do well to ridicule me—he is a man of ice and fire like the Northern lights—did not my compassion guide me to creativeness. And that, little daughter, is why I have decided to make iron men—men of iron that, without living, yet can work.

No, I have not gone mad, nor am I a magician, as some stupid people say. I have already devised a body for this iron servant; there remained only the soul, the energy. And you must know that these are days of triumph for me, for I have discovered a soul for him! His soul shall be steam! Ha-ha-ha! You think I have gone quite mad, my child? Yes, steam! Water under the influence of fire expands, and if . . .

[*He gets up with blazing eyes and gesticulates.*]

[*Mephistopheles enters.*]

Mephisto

Ah, here is His Highness! You are wanted, Duke! There is a revolt in the City. Armed bands have already seized the Treasury, the supplies of cannon and arms at the castle of Sant' Angelo—in a word, all they required for the occasion. Before you give me orders to lead the lancers against them and annihilate the whole of the frenzied mob, you, to satisfy your repute as a humanitarian, will have to endeavour to persuade the ring-leaders to put an end to this tumult. But their purpose in coming here is to persuade you to abdicate your authority.

Faust

What raving—what nonsense is this?

Mephisto

Here they are!

[*The Secretary ushers in Gabriel and Scott.*]

Secretary

In accordance with your Highness' instructions, I am admitting these persons to you, as the matter will not brook delay.

Faust

Do you all leave me. Leave me alone with them!

[*All except Faust and the two Tribunes go out.*]

Faust [*angrily*]

So—you have decided on a rebellion?

Gabriel [*calmly*]

I hope you will hear us out—especially as we shall be brief.

Faust [*sitting down*]

Speak!

Gabriel

Last night your son, in chase of the girl who had escaped from his clutches, who had been abducted by him, killed her brother Hans.

Faust [*springing to his feet*]

Truly?—Go, then, and tell the people to keep calm. The murderer shall be punished. You hear! Faust has said it. I shall know how to be just—to be a just judge of my own children. He shall be punished, had I to pluck out my right eye even as I tear Faustulus out of my heart!

Gabriel

First, oh Duke, hear us out. You, the wisest of all mortal men, will at last understand that Trotzburg has grown up and wants to be free. It will no longer tolerate patrons, guardians and lords. It wants to look you in the face as its first citizen, its consul. Retain the title of Duke, if it so please you. But the City insists on your taking into your counsel two Tribunes, answerable to the people. You see these two Tribunes before you now. Duke, I implore you, do not let anger blind the far vision of your genius. We shall be modest, Duke. We shall be loyal colleagues. We recognise the difference that separates us from you—not because you are the Duke—that is a mere word—but because

you are Henry Faust and we are of the humble rank and file of the workers. But we stand nearer to the people ; your work will proceed much better through us than through that monstrous Alguacil, Mephisto, whom you have set between yourself and the people.

Faust

Gabriel, William,—how can your advice help me ? You are children—you are not yet born, mentally. Very well, then, I make you my counsellors ; but it will be a farce that will waste my golden hours.

Scott

No, Duke, that is not enough. You will have to take an oath before the people that you will undertake nothing against which we two shall set our veto, and you will do all whereon we shall unitedly insist.

Faust

Ah ? And that means that the government—will be you !

Gabriel

Duke, Duke, do not be hasty ! I repeat, we shall know our place.

Faust

No, no, no ! It is just this childish presumption that is the source of these fresh discords. No ! No ! Let the people cool their breath and go back to work. No,—that is my answer ! And I shall suppress rebellion by force.

Gabriel

Think, Duke, think again ! Your words are pregnant with disaster.

Scott

You mean to use force ? We, also, are prepared for that. Nor shall we look backward. You want blood ? It shall flow.

Faust

On your heads be it !

Scott

So be it, then! We shall be proud to write our names in history in the purple of our blood, shed in Liberty's cause. It brands only the tyrant's brow.

Faust

You fools, I shall destroy you utterly, and all of this city, like an ant-heap, and build myself another.

Scott

Be Trotzburg free, or let it perish!

[*Faust moves away from them and stands still, reflecting.*]

Faust

One moment for thought. I loathe bloodshed!

[*He presses his hands to his brow.*]

Make this experiment. . . . Videant ipsi consules. . . . I can make good their errors afterwards. I must, in any case, devote all my present powers to my iron man.

[*He approaches them.*]

Tribunes of the People! We will try an experiment. Rule in conjunction with you, I cannot and will not. Make your choice, then. Either I am sole sovereign of Wellentrotz and Trotzburg, or do you govern without me. I will withdraw to foreign lands and make a new life. I shall not become poor by losing the duchy; but look to it lest you beggar yourselves by losing me.

Gabriel

Do not insist on this, Duke. It is too hard a choice!

Scott

But it has been decided in advance. Better freedom with all its perils, than the wisest of monarchs!

Faust

Are you so sure, my young Scotsman, that the people is of your mind?

Scott

At this moment? Yes! Should they recant later, no doubt they will beseech your gracious return, and offer you our heads as a tribute.

Faust [*cheerily*]

Gabriel, this is your man of action! Have an eye on him! You are a proper honourable democrat, but his eyes are already glittering.

Gabriel

In him at this moment are centred the rays of light and heat of all Trotzburg.

Faust

Take over the government, then!

[*As the Tribunes bow, the door is flung open, and Faustulus, in a bristling rage, bursts in, followed by Mephisto, who is scowling and irritated.*]

You—you criminal! You have the insolence to show yourself here, before my very eyes!

Faustulus

Criminal? Not I, but you, my father!

Faust

You, the murderer of poor Hans,—that fine, gifted lad!

Faustulus

I swear by the Almight Creator I slew him without intent and in lawful self-defence; whoever asserts the contrary is a liar and perjurer. But you—you! You would dare to surrender your crown to these burghers—a crown that doesn't belong to you! Never—never would the Emperor have bestowed upon you the duchy of these flourishing lands, but for your marriage with my mother, the Infanta Elvira; for none has better title to these territories than the Royal House of mighty Spain. You are the ruler of the land for life; but I, your heir, ancestor of all the Dukes to come, I tell you—I swear by God—there is not one Prince, nearby or afar,

who will hesitate to lend me succour against your decision; for you are setting all Europe a pernicious example. Recall your decision—I demand this!

Faust

Prince, Faust never takes back his word.

Faustulus [*beyond himself*]

Then listen, father! There is such a thing as consecrated rebellion, and such will be my revolt against you! The voice of Heaven, the vow of immemorial order summons me! Me none will condemn! I shall take my place at the head of my troops, and I will subjugate to myself the City you abandon. I swear this by the Mother of God, and Saint James, Patron of Spain!

Faust

Gently, gently! You are blowing off like a volcano.

Faustulus

Through me are speaking my ancestors and my descendants.

Mephisto [*smiling venomously*]

He also is elemental, Your Highness!

Faust [*to Gabriel*]

My magnanimous Gracchus, how often have you reproached me for sacrificing men in the draining of swamps, the digging of canals, the laying of roads. . . . But now, you and your friend, you dreamers, you Harmodii Thrasybouli, patriots all—you are setting out to build something greater—something I consider chimerical—and be sure of this: your venture, whatever the issue, will cost blood. If I sacrificed my fellow-men, at least I built something. Will you build anything, great Stoic?

Gabriel

Your rejection of government under agreed principles creates terrible difficulties. . . .

Scott [*impatiently*]

The City has grown up! The City will deal with all its enemies! Let the Duke bid his heralds trumpet and proclaim his abdication in the City, the castles, the villages and the hamlets. We ask no more! Trotzburg will never acknowledge the sovereignty of Faustulus.

Faustulus

It will, insolent bricklayer! I will plant an iron heel upon your head!

[*Scott shrugs his shoulders.*]

Faust [*sitting on his bench*]

Pitiful—pitiful! Thus, then, life is to march on with angry stride, and demands of me that I move out of the way. But it is plainly leading to a trackless waste of hillocks and briars. Pitiful!—So you have grown up, my children,—my son Faustulus and my son Trotzburg! And you want to separate and no longer obey your aged father? Well,—so be it! I wash my hands of it all. [*He makes the appropriate gesture.*] But not like Pilate, giving over the Lamb of God to chastisement—for I swear not one of you resembles a lamb. Ha, ha! You have grown up; you are men? So be it! I grieve for you,—for the blood, the blood so eager to be poured forth,—for the strength that will be vainly spent. But, as ye wish—so be it! Let life proceed on its angry way whither it will. I step aside, my prodigal sons! For the last time, I ask you, Gabriel, as a sensible man, resolute even in your dreams—for the last time I ask you:—Choose! Either I remain as of old, absolute monarch of this City and Land, or the heralds shall trumpet and announce that Henry Faust has abdicated the Dukedom without nominating a successor.

Gabriel

If such the alternatives, Duke, with crushed heart and constrained breast, yet with faith in my people and confidence in the triumph of right, I pronounce for the second choice.

Scott [*with a sigh of relief*]

Ah!

Faust

Faustulus, my son, will you, in obedience to your father, go hence for many years, travelling the whole world over, learning and expanding your mind? I give you my word I will do all that lies in my power for your happiness. Or, will you fight for the Ducal crown that I have renounced, and shed blood?

Faustulus [*hysterically*]

I will not renounce the crown! I will not! I will not!

Faust

Ye have chosen! From the heights of the Falcon Tower I shall survey this comedy of sin. Your childish scuffle afflicts my heart. But you will learn! You will learn from experience if you will not heed advice. The heralds shall proclaim the news. Faustulus, I shall not put any obstacles in your way. Tribunes of the People, you do not desire of me that I, after conceding you everything, should remove the stones from under your feet?

Scott

In the City's name we express to you our gratitude. Conflict with you, great man, would have spelt for us a splendid ruin at most; conflict with others does not affright us.

Faustulus

Let us see what tune you will pipe on the field of battle.

Faust

Baron Mephisto, you stay with me?

Faustulus

The Baron is with me!

Mephisto

I am with the Prince, Your Highness.

Faust

Well, what then? Whoever's pride shall be broken, I shall be right, oh you hapless, haughty children! To-day I shall betake myself to the Falcon Tower. That is my own. Woe betide whoever there assail me!

[*Gabriel bows.*]

Faust [*majestically*]

Now go, my poor children! You, too, Faustulus,—and you, Baron!

[*They all bow and go out, leaving Faust alone.*]

Faust

It all smells so sweet! Yet men, whose lot on earth you would think was hard enough already, are preparing themselves for a savage conflict. But I see words have no weight with them.—Iron-fisted Fate, so far thou hast conquered! Teach them, reason with them; on thy hard path lead my straying children back to me!—The tragedy of it!—Yet I have three treasures left to me for my support—my beautiful Faustina, my iron man, and my faith that the others will all return to me. To work then, Faust! Await your hour, and create!

[*He walks out slowly.*]

[*Mephisto enters by the opposite door, and follows him stealthily. He stops at the door to the workroom, by which Faust went out, and glances after him.*]

Mephisto

So this is how you turn the tables? But you will lose the game!—This Faust is a very bundle of surprises!—However you juggle it, I swear by the Mother, you shall lose! You are already on a little islet, with wild waves raging all around you. You shall lose everything! Can there be any doubt it—who will win our contest?

Cockatoo [*squawking loudly*]

Faust! Faust! Faust!

Mephisto [*threatening it with his finger*]

Stupid bird!

CURTAIN

SCENE V

[*A room in the Bishop's palace. The blue light of a ceiling lantern barely illuminates the corners of the room, filled with armchairs and couches. In one corner there is a statue with two lamps alight in front of it—so beautiful that it is hard to tell at sight whether it represents the Madonna or Hera. In the middle of the room, under the lantern, is a round table, covered with a gorgeous table-cloth, and on it silver dishes, with the remains of a rich repast, coloured glasses, many shaped decanters and flagons of wine. In armchairs some little distance from it, and in a convivial mood, drinking wine, sit Bishop Wilfrid, Judge Jan van der Hoog and Baron Mephisto.*

The Bishop wears a violet silk cassock, a golden cross set with turquoises on his chest, a violet coloured cap on his curly grey hair. His face and hands are white and aristocratic, with a number of rings on his soft plump fingers, his lips glitter with wine, his cheeks are rosy, his nose is thick and benign, his eyes kindly. He is very fat, yet elegant.

The Judge is a thin man in a black satin robe. He is bald in front, but has thick flowing hair at the back. A chain of office on his shoulders. His hands are dark, his fingers long, his complexion greenish, dull eyes with much white showing, and raised brows as though he were always in a state of amazement.]

Bishop [*sipping his wine*]

My dear Baron, you have absolutely set me at ease. And your advice seems to me the height of reason, So far they show no signs of life. And, after all, even they [*emphasised*] will not venture to lay hands on us—and, least of all, on me, the servant of the altar, protected by all the sanctity of the Church and Rome. As soon as ever the Prince returns with a powerful army, we shall repair to him and announce—I in my pastoral authority and Van Hoog in his judicial capacity—that the lawful heir to the throne is Faustulus, and that the rebels are liable to severe punishment, as on earth so also in the life to come. Until then—quiet! Ah, there is nothing I love so much as quiet; for, my friends, as you know, stomach is the man. Get the stomach out of order and —result—pessimism; keep the stomach in proper working order—result—a noble mind, a sincere heart, a happy disposition. Let me admit that I, instead of praying, "deliver me from all evil," substitute "deliver

me from a disordered stomach." For, my friends, what antiquity misdeemed the temptation of Satan, was merely a disorganised digestion, vapours rising from the smouldering entrails to the brain. . . . On the other hand, Grace is nothing more than an extraordinary harmony of the functions of the digestive organs. All the heretics, my friends, have suffered from catarrh. That is why they are called *catarrhoi*. The Fathers of the Church used to prescribe fasting, just as doctors advise dieting. The stomach, my good friends, is superior to the head. For never could any wisdom, swallowed by the eyes perusing books, enable us to take into ourselves as our own the Lord himself; yet we partake thus of Christ's flesh and blood in the substance of bread and wine through the agency of the mouth and the stomach. As with matter, so with deity,—man's means of communication is the same, through the stomach; which is thus our point of contact with the universe. Plato assigned the primacy to the head, Hippocrates to the heart, Aristippus to the sexual organs; yet we all know of people witless, heartless, sexless—but stomachless, never!

Mephisto [*applauding loudly*]

Bravo, bravo! Let us stand up and sing the laudation of the Bishop!

Mephisto and the Judge [*stand up and sing in bass*]

Dominus episcopus,
Vir sapientissimus,
Stomacho fortissimus,
Vivat longum sæculum
Ad salutem pecorum!

[*The Bishop thanks them, pressing his plump hands to his heart.*]

Judge

They do not like me—although, I swear by the alma mater of my brilliant youth amongst the learned doctors of Bologna, I am acquainted with all the niceties of Roman law. I can handle the Codex

Justinianus like an organist his organ. I even now and then obtain from it some chord of my own that may be useful. I remember their petition against me presented to the Duke. I laughed it aside with my Latin. He came to hear me give my decision. I swear he did, by Papinian's beard! On this occasion, on the Baron's advice, I put legal precedents aside and acquitted them all, pronouncing the decisions as the great Alguacil had taught me. But I know, had I not so acted, the Duke, who is a poor jurist, would have expelled me from Trotzburg. I shall get on much better with the young Duke. Further, what is justice and the lawful procedure of a court? Is there any external criterion? The sages have entrusted their wisdom to the Judge's hand, just as they consign to those of a good cook their victuals and condiments. Out of them he concocts a judicial sauce, wherewith he seasons every case—naturally, with proper regard to circumstances, in accordance with his own taste or that of some prominent gastronome.

Mephisto

Bravo! Bravo! Your reverence, stand up, and we will sing the laudation of the Judge.

Bishop and Mephisto [rise and sing]

Vivat judex optimus,
Vivat vir doctissimus,
Semper servus regibus,
Sed dictator legibus.

Mephisto

Law and the Church! What great words! The whole soul of the police consists of this alone: to support Law and the Church, as these support Society and the Throne. As for the army—in so far as it is my special pride—it is proving itself to be a sort of police. In international matters, might is still right. Never will there be order everywhere triumphant, until all over the universe there reigns one Church, one Law, and one Police!

NAWAB SALAR JUNG BAHADUR

Bishop

Amen!

Mephisto

I propose that we do not confine ourselves to the traditional *vivat*, but should each of us sing couplets in praise of his fellows, the Judge to the Bishop, I to the Judge, the Bishop to me. Do you agree?

Judge

Agreed! I used to scribble verse in the vernacular, as a student. Let me just collect my thoughts—and choose a topic . . . hm . . . hm. . . Ah, now I think I have it!

Great indeed is God's true Church!
Mm . . . mm . . . Mm . . . mm . . . yes . . . true Church . . .
Lofty purpose doth she search.
She is for all a stumbling-block
Who might relinquish the great rock,
Law and order's only bulwark . . .
No rhyme to bulwark! Mm . . . mm . . . bulwark . . .
The pillar of propriety
Whom terror serves and piety,
. . . . Ah . . . Mm . . . piety!
Served by the dead and oft by sinners . . .
. . . Again no rhyme . . . nothing but dinners . . .
[*In a deep bass*] . . . Mm . . . sinners . . .
The greatest solace we may win us
Is constitutions in good order. . . .
. . . Mm . . . order. . . .
By building our rich palace broader.
There, within our palace gates,
Long live and function our prelates!
False accent! The devil! . . . palace gates . . .
The devil take it! . . . palace wall . . .
. . . prelates . . . The devil take 'em all!
Enough! [*In a deep bass.*] Basta!

[*They all laugh aloud, clink glasses and drink.*]

Mephisto

Now my turn!

I'll pipe you now the Judge's praise,
And the Law's and his ineffable ways.
Guilty wights, now shall ye tremble,
For solemn see the Court assemble,—
See behind the judge two foxes
Dragging antique scales in boxes;
Brothers true are judge and merchant,
So the scales will suit the serjeant.
Wolves support the sword of justice,
Wherewith each hothead from his bust is,
On good causes truly stated,
Legally decapitated.
Comes an ape in chains behind them,
To let law itself remind them
That the Law is Force's bratling.
To this precedental rattling
Courts can forge men's guilt at pleasure.
Yet, good friends, to their own measure
Judges dance—their chains are straiter—
Truth their judge, Force their dictator.
Piles of paper, all a-huddle
On an ass in misty muddle!
All things needed spring to existence;
For the judge must have subsistence!
Force's cubs are those bare packets,
Deftly bound in their strait jackets.
Note how most decorous each is
Though they go withouten breeches.
Nowhere more distinguished fudge is
Found than in our courts and judges.

Judge

Bravo! Bravo! The praise of justice! There is nothing higher! I ask you, what is God himself? A judge! That's as true as I'm drunk!

Bishop

Most esteemed Baron, the Church celebrates you as the representative of lofty subtlety.

The subtle Serpent once beguiled the woman Eve,
And to God's wrath led our first parents. But, believe
This in addition—that the fall of Man yet proved
A boon; for on the road of sin men slowly moved
And timidly made ready for the faith of Christ.
Ne'er could the Cross have risen, had not the Snake enticed.
That is why Moses in the desert on a pole
Set up a brazen Serpent to convert the soul.
"Harmless of heart be ye, as doves," thus Christ once spake,
"Yet hide in your wise heads the sharp tail of the Snake."
So, by the Snake, the Fiend our foe? Revered Mephisto,
Nay! To the pure, you know, all things are pure, per Cristo!

Mephisto [*with a deep bow*]

Could I but feel myself a worthy representative of the ancient Serpent, I would thank you on his behalf. The ancient Serpent was black as night, incommensurable and infinite. There arose a senseless fool whom the Babylonians called Morduch. Morduch shattered the ethereal chasms and created Light; and the eternal Darkness, that harmonious ring, that peaceful immobility, was splintered into fragments, out of which this pitiable world was constructed. But the æons shall flow by, the Heaven and the Earth shall pass away, as the Prophets have foretold, yet the ancient Serpent liveth—not only in this enslaved and senseless existence, but also in the form of very many sinuous snakes and snakelets, dragons and worms, which nibble at Existence, so as to hasten its downfall. The world is a Hell scorched in the flaming of the Light,—which shall not be put out, as the Gospel says. But this sinful Existence is being gnawed through by the Great Worm, who also shall not die. It is said of the distant descendants of Adam, that they shall bruise the head of the Serpent. The text is corrupt. What was meant was, that you shall be the crest on the crown of the Serpent's head, that the Serpent shall be the foundation of your

pillars. The Serpent in the State is the great Alguacil, policeman and censor, extinguisher of the light, upholder of the old order which approaches ever nearer to its downfall; and on its crest there is uplifted the Allied Church. This is the great mystery.

Do ye drink a cup of strong wine, a loving-cup, ye lips of order! Verily, verily, I say unto you, if we succeed in preventing its reformation this mean life will go on all the way back to nirvana, to the bliss of sleep, to the beatitude whereof the Saints once dreamed; and there will triumph the one true order, the order of the taciturnity of the graveyard of all motion. Drink ye!

Judge

I swear by Gaius, I haven't understood a word; but the Baron's such a good little fellow I would drink with him were it to Satan himself!

[*He drinks.*]

Bishop

Baron, who can discern the depths of the universe? The most ancient of men asked: "Knowest thou whence all is, and wherefor thou art, who sittest on the summit of the universe? Or knowest thou nought of this?" Where is the plenitude of knowledge? Why, then, plunge into the abyss? I float on the surface, and say:

> For your passing hour prevail,
> Short-lived creature of a day!
> One brief flare, and then thy frail
> Spirit flits from thee away.

Let the immortal soul torment itself with questions of eternity—not the frail body! Baron, this is my mortal body that is clad in a violet silk; it is warm, it rejoices, it breathes, it thinks, it desires—yes, *it!* The soul, I do not perceive. If, after the body's death, it is released, then let it take thought for what it shall behold with fleshless eyes. But so long as I am material, I believe

in the material Church, the great social institution. Do thou serve her as she serves me! After a cup of two I am quite frank with my friends.

[*He drinks. There is a knock at the door and a lay-brother enters.*]

Lay-Brother

Most Reverend Father, Count von Stern begs leave to enter.

Bishop

Certainly, certainly, admit him!

[*Count von Stern enters, in riding costume.*]

Stern

Friends, I have come to offer you my alliance!

Bishop

You come from the Duke, most noble Count?

Stern

On the contrary, he sought to dissuade me from taking this step; but something greater induces me to come to you—my hatred of any kind of disorder. Friends, our victory is beyond all doubt. The heavens foretoken a great defeat of the rebels. They foretell the enthronement of Prince Faustulus, his father's reconciliation, and the cloudless rule of the new monarch. The life of my future father-in-law will be as cloudless, and I and my betrothed have granted to us a long and peaceful life, and a sufficiently numerous posterity. The combination of the planets augurs the best fortune for us.

Mephisto

Excuse me, Count, but I should like to know more exactly what Duke Faust writes you.

Stern

He writes, as I have just said, that he does not approve of my participation in his son's expedition, and would rather see me beside him in his palace with my beautiful

bride. But he also says that, having decided to observe the strictest neutrality in the quarrel of his children, he will not insist.

Mephisto

And what did you reply ?

Stern

I expounded my motives to him.

Bishop

Astrologically ?

Stern

Of course.

Mephisto

Tell me, Count,—have the stars never lied to you ?

Stern

A sceptic's scoff ! Never ! Sometimes it may have happened I miscalculated a horoscope, but *post facto* I have always traced the error, and have convinced myself—did I need convincing—that, save for such slips, the future would be as clear as though it were past history. Besides, I have an occult system, orally transmitted to my spiritual father of blessed memory, Dr. Aegyptus, and derived from Hermes Trismegistos himself.

Mephisto

I once heard that this Aegyptus was a beggarly charlatan and an utter ignoramus. You see the depths to which slander can descend !

Stern

Oh, but any calumny of my sacred teacher is never forgiven ! My father's major-domo, Julius Barfuss, once dared to carry to my father a false report against the doctor—namely, that the doctor, on the pretence of conducting observations from the Tower, was there drinking good sherry wine in the company of his pious kinswoman, Rachel Levy—a majestic and beautiful

woman, very learned and sedate—and that he, Julius, had peeped through the keyhole and seen them take off their clothes and silently dance certain Bacchic rites!

Mephisto

O-ho!

Stern

But, that same night, the night on which he laid his information, Barfuss had a frightful vision. A figure all in dazzling white crept into his bedroom, and pronounced these words—"For the dishonouring of Saints" —and then smote Barfuss with a rod on his stomach with unimaginable force; and so vanished, Barfuss shrieking. And on the place where the blow had descended there soon appeared a great bruise. Then, as the outrageous man would not repent, but on the contrary maintained that the visitor was no Being from Beyond, but Doctor Aegyptus himself in disguise, another misfortune overtook him; for, at my tearful intercession, my deceased father expelled Barfuss from the Palace!

Mephisto

Yes, the uprightness of the Doctor is evident!

Stern

He was a great man! Once he . . .

[*A loud knock echoes at the door. The lay-brother runs in, frightened.*]

Lay-Brother

Can't you hear, Your Reverence? The whole courtyard is filled with armed men! The Tribune is already ascending the staircase with an armed following! I'm all a-tremble. . . .

[*Confusion in the room.*]

Bishop

Have they dared? Oh, my stomach, my stomach!

Judge

What? Do the rebels dare to assail the majesty of the law? Where can we hide? In every situation there is always some avenue of escape.

Mephisto

Well, as far as I am concerned,—farewell!

[*By a swift movement Mephisto spreads his dark cloak with the red lining outward, sits on it, whistles, and flies away by the window, which opens with a bang. Scott enters, followed by soldiers and apprentices with torches.*]

Scott

Bishop Wilfrid, Judge van der Hoog, you are hereby relieved of your duties in Trotzburg. Do not reply; the resolution was passed by the Town Council on the recommendation of both the Tribunes. You will forthwith leave the city.

Bishop

But—our property?

Scott

You arrived here without any property; you have not engaged in any productive work in the city; what you mistakenly considered your property belongs to the City of Trotzburg. Get ready! The horses are waiting. Captain, conduct these gentlemen to the frontier!

[*He turns round smartly and goes out. The Captain and some soldiers remain*]

Captain [*roughly*]

Sharp's the word!

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

[*The Park and orchard at the base of the Falcon Tower. A night in August. Throughout there is heard the splashing of an unseen fountain. The trees, heavily laden with fruit, gleam in the beams of a bright moon. The air is sweet with the odour of an espalier of cream tea-roses. On the left, the dark mass of the Falcon Tower, its marble veranda and broad staircase with a balustrade and flower-pots. To the right a low stone wall, also decorated with vases, beyond it a road, and on the other side of the road, bushes. From time to time a nightingale warbles. A continuous throbbing of grasshoppers. The Tower clock slowly strikes eleven.*

In the moonbeams on the road, there appears a Mystic Knight on horseback. A soft bluish light glitters on his armour, shield, and helmet with lifted visor. A long white cloak hangs from his shoulders and covers the horse almost down to the ground. The horse is also white.

A young and gentle Page, in a silver costume and a beret with an ostrich plume, leads the horse by the bridle. The Page has a golden trumpet in his belt The Knight carries a harp.

They stand still. Rising on his stirrups, the Mystic Knight looks around. Then he gently passes his hand over the harp-strings, producing a sweet chord.

A pause. Then the Knight begins to sing, accompanying himself on the harp.]

Oh, full of strong sap is our old mother Earth ;
In her bosom with milk overflowing
The hidden roots lie, drinking deep from their birth,—
Sweetly, silently drinking and growing.
Scarce rustles the leaf, when the fruit hangs low,
And comes Death sweeping down from the North ;
For in cycle thus the full tides of Life flow,
Roaring torrent the Fountain pours forth.
At the height of its power Life fashions the seed ;
Brooding slumber of Autumn is here,
In the magic of sleep Life turns dream into deed,
And makes ready new spring for each year.
" Death will always prevail, Death will always prevail,"
The sad waters of Autumn lament.
" Life will always avail, Life will always avail,"
Fields and orchards in whispers dissent. . . .
Gentle rapture of moonlight, dim blue-shadowed dream,

Warm aroma of roses that fade,
Lisping, chattering fountain, and sad-sweeter stream
Of a nightingale song in the glade.

[*The Page sounds his trumpet, listens, and then sings in a boy's pure alto.*]

O-eh ! O-eh !
All ye who softly sleep, rouse ye !
Ye dead, to new life rise !
And may for each his blessing be
The self-creating power to see
Eternal Spring through lovers' eyes !
O-eh ! O-eh !

[*They stand listening a moment, and then slowly pass on. Faustina wrapped in an immense Venetian shawl, emerges on the veranda, shyly and swiftly looks out along the road, and runs down the steps.*]

Faustina

Eleven o'clock ! The letter the dove brought me said he would be here at eleven.—How I dreaded I should be late ! [*Pause.*] Father was so long getting to sleep. He was working all last night, and will probably soon wake up again, drink his elixir, and sit down to work again. Old Wenzel has been long since asleep, and there is no one else in the Tower, for the page has galloped away with a message to Arthur, and the gardener is by now at home with his children. Yet, I am afraid ! Perhaps not so much of anyone seeing us, as of this meeting itself. I am all a-shiver, though the night is warm. I am so glad to see him—it is so long since I saw him—and yet I almost wish he would not come ! For I know what he will talk about.—Oh father, father, how I love you, my poor great father !—Who is coming ? 'Tis he !

[*Gabriel appears, riding a black horse and leading another. He leaps down and jumps over the wall.*]

Gabriel

Faustina ?

Faustina

Here I am!

Gabriel

My beloved!

[*He embraces her. A long silence. The water purls.*]

Faustina

Sit here near me. Father is asleep. No one else is at home.

Gabriel

It is idle to sit here. I have brought a horse for you. It is too late to think it over. One moment's delay often ruins a cause. Let us go, Faustina! You are trembling?

Faustina

But have we decided? Now—like this? You did not warn me. . . .

Gabriel

In order to spare your poor little head the torture. . . .

Faustina

Gabriel, Gabriel, it is so difficult! [*She weeps.*]

Gabriel

Sooner or later it must be, if you really love me.

Faustina

Oh!

Gabriel

But you yourself—did you not say how joyfully you looked forward . . . [*Faustina throws herself into his arms.*] You had better be with me. You will never be able to stand an explanation with your father.

Faustina

But he—will he be able to stand this blow?

Gabriel

Faust is strong. Possibly, left quite alone, he will the sooner break his pride and come to the aid of the City. This is already the second month of the siege. Brave as are our men, there is a terrible balance of strength with the enemy. Oh, Faustina, here you live so peacefully, so idyllically; but there—nothing but sombre anxiety on every face. There is the repressed discontent of the rich citizens, disturbed by my orders for the social organisation of work and by my scheme of taxation. At the same time a dangerous band of young hot-heads is afoot, which all the vagabonds, drunkards and madmen join. They have found a leader in the person of that aged fire-eating foreigner, who is known by the name of Rebble. Add to this thousands of little unforeseeable worries, every one of them full of danger, because the least slip may shatter the fragile and superficial harmony of our Republic. I exhort and threaten. I work without remission. I have found a splendid assistant in Beveren, the cobbler. The minstrel Gunther Hunt also helps me along. No, I cannot complain that there has been any lack of capable men forthcoming in the City. All the foremen are beyond praise. But I am tired! I have never a moment of rest or pleasure, Faustina. Some nights not even an hour for sleep; and never one drop of kindliness. You know, my mother died three years ago, and my good wife before her, quite young and childless; and with those dear ones I had grown so used to sympathy and affection. Even in those days I worked hard; but when I got home it was like bathing in a warm ocean of peace and love. But now I live in a strange solitude. I adore you, Faustina. I never thought I should so worship any human creature. Your absence is as a live wound in my heart, making it drip its life-blood—and I need every drop of my blood and my strength. If you only knew how much enthusiasm, what glowing language, what soul-stirring happenings and lofty moments there are in Trotzburg now! Yet also there hangs over us all the sombre doubt. And about us lie the wounded, the dead. It is no place of

mirth I am bidding you come to! You see how selfish I am! But I swear to you, by Trotzburg great and free, whom I serve with even greater love, did I not think that I and my powers were necessary to the very life of our dear City, lamp and ensign to the poor and enslaved, hope of the sages and lovers of truth,—then I should not have a thought of myself. But, I tell you, your presence will pour a radiance into my heart, will give me tenfold strength; and all around will leap for joy when they know we have with us Faust's own daughter as the wife of a modest Tribune. Do we not love each other? If so, then together let us weather this storm. When it passes by I shall put off my scarf of red and green; for I shall insist on the annual relief of tribunes. I shall occupy myself with the economic problems and the drafting of just laws for Trotzburg redeemed, as a private councillor of the people. For I do not want either to retain power in my own hands, or to relinquish it to those of William Scott. The great City must not have over her even the shadow of a master. Then we shall lead a quiet life, full of splendid work and gentle love. Thereto my peace-loving heart calls me. But how much of peril and conflict before we reach this goal! And at such a time as this you are still far from me! Does not your heart cry out to you: Go! Go! To Trotzburg—to your Gabriel!

Faustina

Gabriel, I love you with all my heart. You are noble and wise, you are consecrated; and your holy thoughts are my religion. I am ready to devote every moment of my life to you and your cause. But Faust . . . [*She weeps.*]

Gabriel

Decide, Faustina! It will soon be midnight. At any moment your father may awaken from his light evening sleep. . . . He will call you.

Faustina

And I shall not be there to answer him! There will be no answer, and he will be here alone . . . alone . . . [*She weeps.*]

Gabriel

And I? There, in the horrors of the siege; perhaps stabbed by the knife of one of the enemy's paid assassins.

Faustina [*embracing him feverishly*]

Oh, how I pity you . . . both! [*She sobs.*]

Faust [*from within*]

Faustina!

[*The sound of a handbell.*]

Faustina

He has woken up!

Gabriel

You can waver no longer! Listen! I shall not come back again! Speak! Condemn my heart to sorrow . . . but choose!

Faustina [*wrapping her shawl about her*]

Let us go, let us go! May this act of mine be forgiven! My head is whirling! Help me! [*Gabriel leaps the wall and helps Faustina on to it and into the saddle.*] If I were a believer, I should pray. Oh Earth, our Mother, almighty Nature, judge me! Father, father, forgive me, forgive!

[*Gabriel mounts and turns the horses' heads. They ride off and the thud of hoofbeats dies away. The fountain purls. The nightingale sings. The wind rocks the lustrous golden fruits on the apple and pear trees. Suddenly, as from a distance, there is heard the note of the golden horn, and then the Page's voice*]

Page

O-eh! O-eh!
Let answer this whom life hath taught
The anguish Love can give:
How shall Love's malice be unwrought
By grief? Oh, drive it hence—'tis nought
But cowardice—and live!

O-eh ! O-eh !
What though thy heart with anguish break,
Yet live and love—live for Love's sake !
Love grows—resist it then no longer :
Malice is strong but Love is stronger.
O-eh ! O-eh !

[*Faust, in a dressing gown, leaning on a stick, his head bare, comes into the garden.*]

Faust

Faustina, my angel ! Are you here ? [*He listens.*] Where is she, then ? How strange ! This is not her wont. Faustina, Faustina, I have woken up. . . . By this time she has usually prepared my spiced elixir. . . . Or has the poor child dropped off to sleep somewhere.

[*Midnight sounds in the Tower. A Passer-by comes up to the wall and listens.*]

Faust

Little daughter !

Passer-by

Your Highness !

Faust

Who is there ?

Passer-by

A faithful servant. Your daughter has just ridden down the road with the Tribune Gabriel, flying like the wind to Trotzburg. . . . I fear, Your Highness, she has run away from you.

Faust

What scoundrel is chattering behind the wall there ! Were you nearer I would break this stick on your accursèd head ! What are you croaking about, foulest of slanderers on earth ! [*He turns and goes in, calling.*] Faustina ! Wenzel ! Faustina ! My page ! Anybody !

[*The Passer-by laughs grimly, and walks on. Silence. The water trickles sadly. The moon shines brighter. Faust's voice is heard vaguely from inside the castle. He comes out again, now somewhat bowed and his beard in disorder. He sits on the bench where Faustina and Gabriel sat.*]

Faust

Run away? Faustina—from me? Impossible! With my enemy? Unheard of! [*He stares in front of him in angry silence.*] Forsaken me? And for whom? For that visionary? Incomprehensible! And never a word. . . . Run away—run away like Jessica from Shylock. . . . On such a night, on such a night! Run away, like Desdemona. . . . And I am alone, like Lear. How distant, how foreign, all such fancies used to seem to me—and now I am living in the reality of their sorrow. . . . Hold awhile, Faust, you still do not believe it! Faust, you still do not dare believe it! Your dear Faustina run away from you? She hid in her soul, as in a dark night, her love and her intentions,—deceiving you? [*He covers his face with his hands, speaking hoarsely.*] Foolishly deceived her loving father. . . . Ah, now you begin to believe it, old fool! What, now tears? Do you think you can still weep? Here is when your youth leaves you . . . and the chill comes over you. Trotzburg . . . Faustulus . . . Faustina. [*In a weak voice, almost a childish whimper.*] Children!

[*He raises his head proudly.*]

Faust, you are alone—the depths of the heavens above you; under your feet the globe of earth; death before you, and behind you the terrible road, the graves of the dead.

So, now you are alone. [*He rises and crosses his hands on his breast.*] Somewhere they all live and struggle on, but without you. You have been found superfluous. This is death . . . this is death, old man! Do you hear the funeral knell? And around you, all things live on. . . .

Lo, the fruit falls, bearing the seed in its sweet body full of sap, but what has grown old, shall die. . . . Yes, this is death, Faust, when none has need of you, loved

by none and none to love. You are flung aside into a dark corner. . . . What? I—I? I, Faust—not needed? But where is then the other titan? Who has come to take my place? Gabriel? Scott? [*He laughs bitterly.*] No, indeed! No! It is only that you have died. They have taken from you the creation of your genius, they have taken from you even your daughter, and have proclaimed you superfluous. Revenge? Shall I prove I am the same man still? Shall I destroy? But, you—you are dead; and if you now begin to do harm, you will only be changing into a vampire. It is they who, all at once, have turned aside. You have remained true to your genius, your love, your ideas, your iron man. This—all this—has been buried with you in one common grave. Believe it, believe it, Faust, you are dead! It is evident. Oh, were you yet alive, would the gentle Faustina have left you, without one good-bye, without a word? Would she have gone without a thought, without one glance behind? Even to a corpse they give a last kiss. But the human body is strong, even in old age; I have died, yet my body lives on . . . with none to be near . . . alone. Well, then, peace to my thoughts, an end to my pain! Peace and rest! We will mount our Tower and look out once more upon the world. I am no use? Very well, we will see! Perhaps they will be horrified, and repent, and another time will not break the heart of another Faust. But you are shedding one another's blood like brute beasts, remorselessly! You fling aside with a smile those who had unbounded love for you! You—you are brutalized? You shall have your lesson. Faust, on the last page, will write: Thus I lived and thought, and here is what I was preparing for men; but they were brutalized, so Faust departed. May the miracle be accomplished; may mankind yet become worthy of another Faust! [*He rises with an effort.*] Old age has suddenly smitten me. The last drops of youth, the water of life in me, have run out.

[*He goes in, walking slowly and bowed. The fountain drips sadly The nightingale sings. The moon gleams brightly. The golden fruit falls heavily from the boughs.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

[*On the top of the Falcon Tower. A broad platform encircled by a battlement. A clear sky, bright moon, stars. In the splendour of the mysterious light, an immense plain extends afar. Hills, forests, and villages with twinkling lights. At the sea-board, like a mass of glowing coal, lies Trotzburg; and around it, a wreath of the tents of the besieging armies.*

Faust slowly mounts the steps, emerging into the moonlight out of a broad dark aperture. He has a cup in his hands. He slowly approaches the battlement, and sets down the cup. He sits beside the parapet, and looks round.]

Faust

The message is written—Faust's last word to mankind is written. [*Pause.*[Now, Nature, farewell! Marvellously immensity, permeated with light, vibrating with movement and life's potentialities. . . . [*He lifts his head to the stars.*] Wonderful, wonderful! Colossal! Genius! And every part as nothing to the whole. You will sink into it,—you will be absorbed without leaving a trace. And meanwhile it will all live on in its myriad parts. . . . Yes, it is all splendid! It is all splendid, even with all its inherent suffering. This world is beautiful. . . . Faust dies, not because he is tired of the world, but because he is old and the times are unpropitious. [*He lowers his eyes.*] Oh, gentle Earth, warm and green, with your playful waters, farewell! I have loved thee! And thou shalt yet be the marvellous arena for the feats of a race endowed with lustrous beauty and divine wisdom. When shall this be? Shall it be, indeed? Or is it miscarrying? Is not man, in his generality, a degenerate, a failure of blind self-creative existence? Possibly. The drama is full of riddles. The future smiles only with the smile of the Sphinx. Yet have I loved this smile! I love thee, thou merciless immeasurable Pan who livest in all. . . . Yet, strange! Here is to be destroyed a form of a high order —for, it must be admitted, were it not for me and the likes of me there would not be any of this clarity, beauty, order. The atoms know nothing of one another, or of themselves. Yet here is to be destroyed such a form. There is in every man something of a majesty superior

to that of any star, being of a baser mental order no matter how luxuriant the wealth of its possibilities. Here passes away not simply a man, but Faust, in whose brain the golden threads of life are tied in a knot of miraculous beauty. Yet there is not a shudder, not a sound; everything is indifferent. They say that Cæsar's death was heralded by apparitions. Am I then less than Cæsar? But perhaps the Chroniclers lie. If only some huge face in the heavens were to look down on me with a vast farewell smile, or if the thunder were to peal out to me: Farewell! If only something supernatural were to stir, made for me, and me alone, for my last minute! How quiety and gladly then would I die. No! There is no personal god in the world. The world as a whole is impersonal. Faust is a nonentity! Oh, oh, such a nonentity!

It is only at this moment that I perceive what a petty, solitary thing I am, without link or tie—I, the great Faust, Duke of Wellentrotz and Trotzburg, the most learned of earthly men. . . . Where art thou? I have lost thee. . . . I cannot see thee. . . . I am a crumb devoured by Infinity. . . . Faust, where art thou? Earth, where art thou? And where upon thee is Faust? Death is terrible! And is this Life? The suns—the suns are consumed. Eternity! Oh, my soul, Eternity behind me, and before me the infinitude of endless Eternity. . . . What! Music? My soul, art thou melting? What music! What is this? On high . . . so powerful. . . I am uplifted! Beneath, too, in the depths. . . . Oh, ye voices! What is this? Who sing now in chorus? The stars? The whole world is singing; it sings, it circles, it soars. I'll not meddle, not move, in this! Sweet, terrible,—it all breaks forth again!

With an invincible wave, into my poor narrow breast flow in diaphanous streams chorals extinguishing sound, —flowing and merging by heart, till it is lost in its bliss. . . . . Regular measureless beat, making the firmament quake, calming the tempest of time, free exultation of space.

[*The music becomes generally audible.*]

Ceaseless generation, child of nothingness, powers of transformation, wave-tide limitless! Tale without beginning, things without hands made, circles ceaseless spinning, mysteries displayed! Reason in unreason, aim of aimless might, shining wings uprisen, noisy, infinite! Great or small all equal, agelessly begun, one in endless sequel, link on link firm-spun! Each in his true placing every moment sings, mystic circles tracing, dancing mystic rings.—Let who, self-reliant, were for battle born, bold, of fate defiant, hold their faith true-sworn! Mighty purpose surges; joyous it has soared; every moment merges in one timeless chord!

Thus, then, dost thou sing, O Nature? Is this what thy voice teaches? Blood grows young, from heart to brain pulsing and singing. The song is the self-same eternal song of Nature, arousing slumbrous thoughts, encouringing the oppressed spirit. In the elemental whirlings, amid the gulfs of world creation, here on earth, on this spot, I rediscover myself! I—that I am! In front of my eyes my forgotten ambitions glow afresh; my mind is intoxicated with strong wine and sparkles. . . . To live and create! [*Then as though he were awakening.*] What has happened? A dream? What had come over my soul? Solitude? But am I not here with the universe, with mankind,—with my own work to do? They did not understand? They shall understand! And Faustina? But—is there not some fateful error here? Whither were you rushing like a boy? Does not your Iron Man await you down there in your workshop, already with the shadow of a soul in him? What? I was going to go away without finishing what I had begun?—to go away of my own free will without perfecting my project? Shameful, shameful, you grey-headed infant! Live! As long as your breast heaves, your heart beats, and your brain works, live! And see—your breast heaves mightily, your heart beats fast, your mind works clearly. Death will come in its own good time. Make haste, then, as long as this splendid mind is alive—make haste, so you may leave behind you a furrow, broad and deep,—so

you may rise in the eyes of your brothers and your descendants one step higher on the ladder of human greatness.

[*From afar the voice of the Mystic Knight is heard.*]

The Knight

Death breathes his cold mist on the autumn tree,
And the leaves lie dead in the frost;
But illusions are death and decay for thee:
Shou shalt not pass away or be lost.
Now, thy fruit being ripe, let the seed come to birth;
Lay thee down in the winter to rest
On thy mother's miraculous womb of the earth,
To awaken in spring on her breast.
And let feelings re-felt, thoughts re-thought, glow and mount,
Ever layer on layer new growing;
With thy measures remeasure, thy count re-account,
What past ages on youth are bestowing.

[*The sound of the golden horn and the Page goes by, singing.*]

The Page

O-eh! O-eh!
Tell him whose thoughts beneath the moon
Hang heavy, full of strife,
Life stirs in silences star-strewn,
Through form or feeling, sleep or swoon—
Love's legislator, Life.
O-eh! O-eh!

[*Faust listens attentively, then suddenly, leaning out over the plain, he answers in a strong voice.*]

Faust

O-eh! O-eh!

CURTAIN

SCENE VIII

[*The sand-dunes in South-Eastern Wellentrotz. Dreary hillocks sparsely covered with heather. One large black rock rises peculiarly among the dunes to the spectator's left, almost pyramidal in shape, and known as Devilsblock. In the background a gloomy sea. It is night-time. The clouds are chasing across the sky, throwing fantastic shadows on the sand. The moon is declining. The little valleys, draped in mist, are lit up from time to time by pale summer lightning. Mephisto enters in a long black cloak, one thin end of which drags after him, his head covered with a long hanging hood. He has an evil and pensive mien.*]

Mephisto

Ah, Here! [*He stops.*] This accursèd Trotzburg! This accursèd Faust! Never did I think that out of my labours would rise such a terrible obstacle to the triumph of order! [*He sits at the base of Devilsblock, bites his hand, and utters a strange cry, something between a growl and a sob.*] Mother, mother, I am nigh to desperation! Oh, I know that victory in the end must be ours! Yet what avail my efforts? Faster and faster anguish devours me. I yearn for peace! These human lice of the globe have become hateful to me. Between them all we grow powerless. My magic itself is losing its power. The Things will not obey. We swim against a flowing tide. We pray and melt away like shadows before the Magician Dawn.—Whate'er betide, Faustulus must win to-morrow. . . . Let us begin!

[*He approaches the Devilsblock, slowly and solemnly, making strange passes as though summoning someone from all sides at once. He mounts the pyramid, and on the summit of it puts his fingers into his mouth and utters a piercing whistle.*]

Heigh-oho! Ye deep graves, open wide! Ye flagstones of churches and vaults, yawn ye open! I cleave earth with the spear-head of my whistle, with the scythe of evil charms, with the ploughshare of annihilation. Heigh-oho! Strong bones, rotten bones, dust itself, bestir yourselves,—arise! Ye scattered atoms, seek each other anew! Time past, reconstruct thyself for the sake of destruction! Hoi-oho! Hoi-oho! Old rusty armour, swords and spears, do ye clang together,

roll hither and pile up! Hoi-oho! Heigh-oho! Heigh, heigh! Stand ye beneath the moon, ye ancient peoples, ancient families, tribes and clans! The descendants of slaves have raised an insurrection! They mock your degenerate descendants! Come to the succour of Order, ye dead! Out of the darkness of abbeys, from under the willows and cypresses, from the battle-fields, out of sand and nettles, up from the billows of the ocean, out of your stately tombs, arise and hasten! Draw up your legions! Out of clouds will I weave you banners; the crows shall sing you a martial song! March on, march on, ye rusty warriors! Hoi-oho! Hoi-oho!

[*Groans are heard, a rattling and clattering, and then, with a heavy stamping, from out of the rock there emerge chained horses, mounted by men in chains. Misty banners flutter. A flock of crows flies croaking over the army of the dead. The visors are lowered, but here and there skulls can be seen with staring eye-sockets, the gaps of the nasal bones, and horrible grinning jaws.*]

Mephisto

More! Still more! [*He waves his hands in all directions.*] Ye paladins of the past, ye terrible ancestors, ye powers of things consolidated! Hither, hither, to the succour of your degenerate descendants! Let not serfs have mastery of the earth! [*He whistles again.*] Ah, a gallant army, a gallant army, indeed! To-morrow, in the heat of the fray, a cold shudder shall grip the hearts of the combatants. Paltry Life's warriors shall tremble, but the champions of Order shall feel the mighty support of the dead hand. And ye, ye mighty bones, ye knights of the worm, of blight and mouldiness, ye shall display yourselves amid the consternation of a dreadful panic—and ye shall conquer! For with you is my Mother, who is casting you off anew, after swallowing you in the maw of death—Mother Night! Ye splendid, gallant cavaliers, now let loose your battle cry!

[*A strange heavy groan re-echoes over the dunes. Someone cries out rendingly. Then a louder and longer cawing of crows.*]

Mephisto [*folding his hands on his breast*]

Ye hapless churls, without ancestry or lineage, ye rootless grass, try your reckoning with these glorious ones! Bravo, bravo, my skeleton soldiers! Ye shall conquer!

[*A loud discordant whine, a click of teeth, a crackling of bones, and the dull clank of iron.*]

Do ye remain motionless on this plain, ye resurrected! When I shall whistle to you, ye are to march ahead to the battlefield. Mother now our cause is assured! I thank thee for returning thy dead; they shall bring back to thee many others; thou shalt have heavy interest, thou great usurer!

[*Suddenly a harmonious note is heard, as though a giant hand had plucked an immeasurable harp-string The clouds scatter; the valley is brilliantly illumined with the moon. A large green star gleams in the middle of the horizon over the sea. A translucent green figure of a half spectral woman appears in the air near the coast Her melodious voice sounds from afar*]

Speranza

Presume not, thou poor demon, to meddle with thy black magic in the battles of living Life!

Mephisto

Empty apparition, that my breath might dissipate, wilt thou prohibit me?

Speranza

Thou weighest down one of the scales with the dust of the past? Then I on the other will set the vision of the future—my power! Thou hast summoned from their graves the ancestral oppressors: I will summon the bright descendants of those who seek freedom.

[*Speranza raises her hands The green star blazes up and throws a dazzling kaleidoscopic road of light across the waves, on which, from unseen expanses there issue forth phantoms white and green, thronging the shore in crowds, waving branches of palm leaves, of oak, myrtle and laurel White and azure dove's wings are seen, red banners, and lofty lamps that burn with a blue light*]

Chorus of Spectral Voices [*in melodious harmony*]

With you, in you, for ever are we,—
Athirst for life, the life we shall win;
And with our myriad eyes we see
Life's golden thread, and you who spin.
We hear the martyr's groan, we hear
Earth's prayers in passionate whispers rise,
The ringing words of poet and seer,
The hum of work, and the battle cries.
Athwart all time, still—still with you,
Our hands to our fathers' hearts outspread,
Your life-time here we encircle anew,
And bridge posterity with the dead.
Ye called us hither, and we arrive—
We are here, our life through you to win.
In your own life we are now alive;
Life's golden thread we will help you spin.
And none shall rend it—no, not Fate,
Nor Evil's sword, nor Death's cold spell!
The strife ye lived we gladly await:
In battle of Life we have conquered Hell!

[*All at once everything vanishes. Mephisto is left on the rock alone.*]

Mephisto [*sitting down*]

How weary I am! The feet of my earthly body are trembling. The spirit desires to shake off these worn-out rags!—So, then, I am all but powerless. . . . Yet shall the wheel of time at some season stop; let it meanwhile whirl all the faster, one day it will begin to run down. Oh, cold, still moon, let me console myself with the bare landscape of thy dead lands,—let me sate with them these semi-human eyes! Oh, to rest, to rest there in a quiet nook, where Death has already set up his throne of ice. Accursed Earth, I trample on your face! Hasten to die! So that thy offscourings may not be nourished, thou shalt die! I spit on thee, thou scabby ball of mud! Oh moon,—to thee my kisses!

[*He stretches himself, black and lean, and a countenance of deathly pallor. He stretches himself more, and more, until he suddenly and silently rises and flies into the dead expanse of the moon.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE IX

[*Near a lighthouse, the horizon concealed by the lofty crest of Faust's dyke. To the left, the tall graceful tower of the lighthouse, the lantern of which is alight, alternately emitting green and red rays at regular intervals. One horn of the moon is rising over the dyke. The stars are glittering.*

Groans are audible on the plain in front of the dyke. Gradually it grows lighter, and corpses of horses and men become visible, scattered over the sands. Someone stirs.

Mephisto, wrapped in a black cloak, is leading by the reins a black horse on which Faustulus is seated, bent double, untidy, in armour but no helmet.]

Faustulus

Where are we going ?

Mephisto

To the Nether Regions !

Faustulus

I am afraid !

Mephisto

Sh ! Silence ! . . . Yes, there is someone stirring here. That all-wise astrologer ! Is that you, Count Arthur von Stern ?

Arthur

It is I. . . . Give me some water !

Mephisto

On no account ! You will be dying immediately. If you quench your thirst, you will be all the more ridiculously inflated by to-morrow's or the next day's dawn.

Arthur

I shall die ?

Mephisto

Of course ! You are hacked to bits.

Arthur

But the stars. . . .

Mephisto

Ha-ha-ha !

Faustulus

Your stars, brother, your stars ! A curse on all your star-gazing ! I am cold and terrified. I do not want to die.

Arthur

Nor I. Was it all an illusion ? Who is the evil one that has thus bemocked me ? To be born, to be deceived, to come near the cup of love, and die in a pool of one's own blood . . . beating off the kites with one's own weakening hands. . . . Oh, I am suffering in body and soul !

Mephisto

Look at the stars, let your eyes feast on them ! Soon your eyes will be glazed over. You will be a red and white corpse beneath the glitter. Then you will decay, and there will be a little grass growing on the sands, whimpering and whispering to the breeze ; but the stars will be laughing. Ha-ha ! Victory ! Descendants ! A long peaceful life ! Ha-ha ! . . . Now you, you landless Prince, let us be on our way !

Faustulus

Whither ?

Mephisto

To the Nether Regions !

[*They pass on.*]

Arthur

The stars have lied. . . . To die without having understood anything. . . . The stars. . . . Where am I flying ? . . . Enough of pain . . . enough of thirst . . . perplexity. . . . Sleep. . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE X.

[*In a little house on the outskirts of Trotzburg, where Faust resides incognito. His room and workshop are separated by a tapestry curtain. Twilight. A Venetian window filled with flowering plants in pots, aglow with the bluish light of early evening. Simple furniture, a massive table, books, a globe, retorts, and parts of mechanical devices scattered about. Faust is sitting at the window, dressed in a long robe. He is reading a big book with an old man's spectacles perched on his nose. A pause. He raises his head.*]

Faust

Spring is coming. The days are getting longer. Shall I open the window? Let us see! [*He opens the window.*] Ah, there is my little nine-year-old Holda, barefooted, in her pretty torn frock, and her loose mane of golden hair.

Holda

You have opened the window, Grandad?

Faust

Yes, Holda.

Holda

Mind you don't catch cold!

Faust

It is spring . . . and you are going barefoot.

Holda

I am quite young, and you are old. What are you staring at? My torn clothes? You mustn't think we're poor! Father always says there are no poor in Trotzburg now. Poverty left the city with Faust, he says. . . . And I have some quite pretty dresses; but, you see, I always tear them, grandad. Mother says I spoil everything. And my shoes, too. But I don't like being dressed up. For instance, I have a white muslin dress with a blue sash. . . . But how can you climb trees dressed like,—now, grandad, how can you?

Faust

Quite impossible.

Holda

You see! And I love to climb that old pear tree and peep down into your window from up there and watch you do magics.

Faust

Magics?

Holda

Well, yes . . . make machines. Do you know what father says of you? He says: He's a crazy old gaffer, he wants to make the pere . . . perepe . . .

Faust

Perpetuum mobile.

Holda

Yes, that's it!

Faust

No, your father is wrong. I have already found the perpetuum mobile: it is the World. I am only making light carts, to make it easier for the poor little donkeys to pull heavy loads.

Holda

Then you're not a magician?

Faust

No, Holda.

Holda

Listen! Do you know, Father says . . . he says: Mijnheer Dampfer is so like a certain person that if I were not sure that person were far away and would never come to live in Trotzburg, I should think—father says—I should think that it was he. I don't know who he means.—You aren't tired of me?

Faust

Not at all.

Holda

Are you always working, writing, reading ?

Faust

Yes, Holda.

Holda

And have you no own grandma ?

Faust

No.

Holda

Or children or grandchildren ?

Faust

They are far away.

Holda

If I were your granddaughter I wouldn't have gone away from you ; you are such a nice old man. You are so nice to look at. And I tell all your stories to my playmates, and they all, all love them. . . . Tell me a story, grandad !

Faust

Then jump in by the window, Holda. I am always glad when you come in because you are my little golden mouse.

[*Holda lightly jumps in by the window between the flower pots.*]

Holda

Here's your little golden mouse ! [*She looks round.*] But you are all in the dark.

Faust

We'll light the lamp.

[*He lights a big lamp.*]

Holda

What a pretty lamp you have! Like a white ball. . . . Now, I'll sit in your armchair. That will be nice! The truth is, grandad, my feet are cold.

Faust

We will wrap them up in this shawl.

Holda

How lovely and soft! Now, that's perfect!

Faust

Not quite! Tell me, Holda, do you like mead? I have some here.

[*He fetches a mug from the cupboard, and some mead and cake.*]

Faust

Biscuits, too, you like.

Holda

I'll dip them in the mead! And, now, a story.

Faust [*walking up and down the room*]

Once upon a time, Holda, there lived in the world a wise and rich man. He had a beautiful daughter and a knightly son. He loved them very dearly and hoped for all happiness for them. To this end he chose his daughter a husband and secured the son an important position at the King's court. He took the handsome bridegroom by the hand, brought him to his daughter, and said: "Daughter, this is your husband. Look what a handsome, black-browed, curley-haired youth he is. He is of noble blood, and even richer than we are." But the daughter said nothing, only dropped her eyes, and the bridegroom kissed the tips of her fingers. Then the father went to his son, dressed him in a dress braided with gold, put a precious wand in his hands, and set on his head a crown of jewels, and said: "Go now to the King's court; you shall be his favourite cup-bearer. Honour and joy await you in the royal service." But, little Holda, the son said nothing. And night was approaching. The wise man sat on the steps

leading up to the house, under the trees in his garden. And it grew dark. Suddenly he saw his daughter come out of the house in her white dress, and go and hide in the garden. The wise man saw her glance timidly around, but she did not notice her father was there. And all was still again; only the clear roulade of the tree-frog and the gleams of the fire-flies floating in rings above the bushes. The wise man followed his daughter, passed through the garden, and came to the courtyard. He picked his way among the carts and ploughs, and entered the stable of the working mules and asses, following the white figure of the maiden. The stable reeked of warm manure. In the far stall there was a mule with a big head and very long ears. Through a hole in the roof the light of the eternal stars fell on the beast, chewing hay and slowly swinging its tail. The maiden went up to it. She embraced its neck. She began kissing its shaggy head; and with its rough tongue it kissed her hand. And she said: "Thou art my bridegroom, and I will have no other." The wise man, staggered and frightened, turned back, and could not collect his thoughts. And his old heart was troubled. And then there glided past him into the night, his son, wrapped in a cloak and his hat over his eyes. He stealthily walked out by the wicket gate from the garden into the wood. Feeling something ominous, the father followed the son. It was a black darkness in the wood, full of rustlings. The owl was hooting. And the son walked on to a deep dank cave, and crawled on all fours into the narrow aperture. And all men knew that in that cave there dwelt a snake, and they feared even to look on it, even in broad daylight. The wise man was horrified. He turned back. The clock-tower was striking twelve. "Is my daughter still there with the mule?" he thought; and went to see. He rubbed his eyes, thinking he was seeing amiss, though the moon had risen and it had become light enough. All around was one mysterious blue light. At the door of the stable stood a handsome young man in a grey shirt and a grey hat with two crane's feathers in it. He was embracing the wise man's daughter, and saying: "You know I am industrious, strong and patient. The

evil charm will fall from me when you become my wife, and I shall always have human speech; and, with the aid of your love, I will build up a house of happiness for ourselves and for others; for the workers who have no work, no households, no firesides; for the learned who have no books; for all whose heads or hearts or hands are crippled because Fate has been against them." Then the wise man was confounded. Knowing not what to think, he went into the wood, very anxious about his son. In the bright moonlight he saw his son sitting on a stump beside the entrance of the cave. At his feet lay the serpent, slain, and the boy was scattering bright jewels, rubies, emeralds in whole handfuls, taking them out of golden vases and caskets. Then the wise man exclaimed: "My son, what is this?" And he replied: "This is the fortune I have found and won for myself, because I did not wish to hold cups for the king." And the wise man said: "Your sister, too, has found her own fortune." And this was what had happened. They had themselves found and made their own fortune, as the wise man could never possibly have done for them. And the wise man was ashamed. But then he rejoiced, and said to himself: "I will strive in some way to increase their happiness, to bring the earth nearer to the sun, to send a flying ship to fetch the silver of the moon, and in other ways."

And all these things they will do, because they live in friendship.—Look, Holda, your mother is coming for you.

[*A woman is seen at the window.*]

The Woman

Is my little daughter with you, Mijnheer Dampfer?

Holda

Here, here I am, mama! I have had some mead and am listening to a story.

The Woman

You had better hurry home. After mead you won't want your supper, and after hearing a story you won't go to sleep. You spoil her, Mijnheer Dampfer.

Faust [*stroking Holda's hair*]

All the more joy to children, Fru Kemm!

Holda [*kissing him hard*]

Now go on making your new cart! And thank you for the mead and the story!

[*She jumps out by the window.*]

The Woman

Good-night, Mijnheer Dampfer.

Faust

Goodnight, Fru Kemm. Sleep sweetly and soundly, my little golden mouse. But, stop! Did you take that letter this morning to the Tribune's house?

Holda

Of course! They said the Tribune had left overnight to go and survey the work at Zuidkerken. They are draining the swamps there, like they were doing in Faust's time.

Faust

And his wife?

Holda

She is always with her baby; she wouldn't get the letter all at once. But I saw Pieter Baas lay it on the table where the Tribune works.

Faust

Good, my little pet, very good! Farewell!

Holda

Good-bye, you kind little grandad, you kind . . .

[*She runs away from the window.*]

Faust [*alone*]

I surrender. . . . My pride is silent. . . . The children were right! It is only one winter since the days of the siege, and Trotzburg is already flourishing. O ye youths, ye glorious children! How they have got the

better of me! . . . And it is now three months since Faustina's baby was born, whom they call Henry Faustus,—and I have not yet seen him! Yet, it is true, to go to Canossa without having my Iron Man ready for them, would have grated on me. But now I do not go with empty hands. I have not spent my time in vain. . . . Yes, I must make my peace. Faustulus is living as a toady at any and every court, weaving wicked plots. It would be pitiful to subject my—our Trotzburg to another siege. . . . Well, it is already dark. They will have read my letter . . . and they will come. . . . I tremble at the thought of it.

[*There is a knock at the door.*]

Faust

My daughter!

[*He rushes to the door and flings it open.*]

[*Mephisto, wrapped in a red cloak, stands on the threshold*].

Faust

You? You have no place here!

Mephisto [*taking a step forward*]

We must speak together.

[*He waves the skirt of his cloak, and the lamp almost goes out, leaving only a pale glimmer of light in the darkness. On a black background there is visible only the beautiful grey head of Faust, and the ghastly pale masque of Mephisto.*]

Faust

You are merely wasting my time, and to no purpose, evil spirit. Never did you have any power over me, and now less than ever.

Mephisto

So you are forgiving them? [*Faust is silent.*] You are begging to be forgiven? [*Faust is silent.*] The end, then! In this empty heart there is no life, no fire, no blood. Your fame has been trampled down, your daughter taken from you, your son's estate stolen, and your enemies are insolently raising their heads in

victorious derision of you, making ready for a fœtid triumph in their shopmen's paradise—until mutual envy and hatred shall bring that ant-heap to its downfall—and you, you decrepit boy, you lickspittle, you crawl to beseech them graciously to pat you on the back! And I—why should I feel such horror and shame about you? Because in the chronicle of the ages the traces of our intimacy will be too long discernible; the loathly shadow of your fall, in its banality a surprise even to me, is a reflection upon my spiritual pride; and too long, I repeat, will it stain with the tears of your dotage the virgin blackness of my wings. You pitiable, pitiable being! And I had accounted you the first of men! Are you indeed he, then what is man worth, when even the first of them—look at him!—a soured brain in a split skull of bone, an aged diseased animal that desires peace and rest, a place on the hearth of those who mock him and gibe at him and cast him forth. . . . I, always the enemy of generation,—almost shrivel with contempt at seeing the results! Oh filth, filth! That such a being should dare to exist!

Faust

Pray save your rhetoric for melancholy-mad undergraduates.

Mephisto

You will soon die, Faust!

Faust

That is old news. I do not desire death, but I do not fear it.

Mephisto

You might yet live!

Faust

At what price?

Mephisto

Arise anew! Re-awaken your pride, Faust! Say to me: Let us strike and flatten them out!—Solace yourself with revenge! Stand up before them as a Titan!

Tell them: At my word Trotzburg was, and at my word it shall cease to be!—Give me your hand, and I will bestow on you long life,—I swear it, by the Mother!

Faust

You want me to slay my children so that I may prolong my own days on earth? No! They are of more importance than I am.

Mephisto

You pitiable thing, what now? Modest and humble and contrite? You—you are Faust?

Faust

I am Faust who knows his own worth.

Mephisto

You were never worth much in my eyes, but by your own slavish servility you appraise yourself even lower.

Faust

I am Faust who knows his own worth. For instance, I know that you are my shadow—vacuity,—that any single beat of my pulse is worth more than your spectral existence,—that every quiver of my pupil is more replete of thought than all your phantom wisdom.

Mephisto

Oh, is that so?

Faust

I know indeed little, because mankind is still in its cradle; but I already know that you are a poor stupid devil.

Mephisto

How interesting! Ha-ha-ha! So now that you have to lick the hands with which Faustina virtuously darns her respected husband's stockings, you want to take it out on me! Well, I am listening. Yet, remember, Faust—afterwards I shall have my say! Remember, and let a cold shudder pass through the very marrow of your body!

Faust

You are a poor stupid devil. And this not I alone know, but every yokel as well. The priest represents you as crafty, mighty, and terrible; but the peasant depicts you as the poor fool that you are. In folk-lore every Tom, Dick and Harry can dupe you and cudgel you, together with your everlasting companions, Death and the Policeman. I used to know a soft-hearted old woman who in her old age suffered from hallucinations, and she once told me: "To-day a poor little devil visited me. I was so sorry for him! I gave him some milk. And quite by accident I pinched off his poor little paw. He whined and was all a-tremble, poor little fellow, and daren't come for it, but hid away amongst the logs, and squeaked: 'Mother, you have my paw; oh please, mother, give it back to me!'—I am sorry for the poor little things," she said; "even a little sunbeam is too much for them; and they're no good to themselves or anyone else." [*He laughs quietly.*]

Well then, Mephisto, shall I give you back your paw, which Trotzburg pinched off with its heel of bronze? We—we live and develop. But you—you are the monstrous grey of our shadow, the dusky background of our shining thoughts. You are the King of the Rubbish-heap, King of the Dust-hole. They call you Beelzebub, King of the Flies; but this is doing you too much honour; you are King Carrion, herald of the momentary weakening of Life in its eternal pulsation. When the fly comes out of its egg, it flies on its little webbed wings higher than you. The only reason you do not with envy follow its graceful and triumphant flight, is that you are too blind to understand the majesty and mystery of it, and to pierce into your own emptiness, your silliness, your hopeless inanity. Shall I give you back your paw?

Mephisto

You?—you live and develop? Know then, presumptuous man, that there exists one Night, and that you—ha!—you and all your worlds are a mere incident, a stupid accident, a single instant's error which will be

forgotten—a momentary flicker of Night, which will swallow you all up in her bosom and then sleep. But even before this dream shall uncreate itself in infinitude —this dream you call the Universe—your wretched paling yellowish sun-star will be palsied, will flush red and blue and black, and be extinguished. . . . And your little system will whirl round benumbed in the æther—yet with more sense in it than when you set your heads a-whirling—ha !—with hope ! You not only have existence, you beggars,—that is, motion—from our point of view a most ridiculous and nonsensical half-existence—but, to complete this ghastly obscene error, you feel, and—alas !—you even think. How stupid it all is, how impassably stupid ! You tiny implements, you puppets of necessity, you are endowed with a power of misconception known as understanding—and this, too, simply in order that you may suffer, since suffering is essential to balance. Once such a perversion as motion had been produced, someone or other had to pay for this absurd, this wretched interruption of peace, and so adjust the balance : that is why you suffer. Your pain is the beginning of the backward movement of the pendulum, which I shall stop. The world shall pass away—even before the sun is extinguished, even before you are dust—and the scrap of dream you call your consciousness shall be scattered without leaving a trace.

Faust

Mephisto, do you remember how you came to be born ?

Mephisto

I am part of the All-Mother ; I pre-exist Eternity. But I issued forth out of the holy gulfs of darkness when the dull confusion began. I was born what I am through yearning for equilibrium when it had been destroyed ; and I shall return to sweet and grand repose when it is restored.

Faust

Poor stupid little devil ! Your Mother of whom you talk with such touching veneration, just like a yellow-

beaked fledgeling brought up by a country parson, simply does not exist. Nothing exists as you conceive it. Everything is full, everything is alive. And always has lived. Poor stupid devil, see how thin and blue you have become. You are melting away even in the shadows of my room. Shall I give you back your paw? You imagined that that dark corner where you were born was pre-eternal; it was nothing but the dust-hole of the world, into which all the refuse and offscourings and offals are flung. There you were bred, a parasite, a woodlouse of the universe; and you crawled out and brought with you from your dunghole the ideal of chaos into a world of eternally changing harmonies. The world rubbish-heap of matter, temporarily useless, though at some time still to be brought into service—there you have your Mother. In the glands of the brain, where accumulate the poisonous secretions of an organism, the refuse of nervous energy, there you drag out a misty half-existence, and thence the sun-born blood, with its freight of noble oxygen, drives you forth. You reptile of the chasm, you spider, you child of corruption, you only live because there is always rubbish in the world. One thing is being remoulded, for life; another is dying, for repose. But the realm of light becomes ever higher. Thought grows—thought, the greatest though the youngest of the elements; while you become always more utterly contemptible, until there shall be none to fear Hell. You are an aberration! Shall I give you back your paw?

Mephisto

Who are you to speak so confidently? How dare you oppose my knowledge with your speculations?

Faust

I am so rich and proud that I have no need to deck myself out in borrowed plumes. It may be that what I say is conjecture. But your ideas are a nightmare of debris; mine are a flash of effort. You know? That is enough! Nobody knows. But all live. We are the builders; you—the dust.

Mephisto

Ha-ha-ha! So that's your story! I always did say you were a bundle of surprises! Well, wise Faust, know this, then: to-morrow you will die. I hope you do not believe in the immortality of the soul? To-morrow you will die. [*He leans over to Faust, and whispers hoarsely.*] You will die, completely and for ever!

Faust

Wave succeedeth wave, and then cometh a new wave. [*There is a knock at the door.*] Faustina! She has brought her child—my grandson—Henry Faustus, citizen of Trotzburg, last hope of my days.—Vanish, phantom! Life is a-stir!

[*The lamp flickers. Mephisto disappears. The door opens; Faustina stands on the threshold with a radiant smile. She wears a green cloak with white fur, and holds her baby close to herself in his warm wraps.*]

Faustina

Dear Father! You! . . . Oh. . . . I ran and ran! Let me kiss your hands, your grey hair! [*She weeps.*]

Faust [*also in tears*]

Little daughter! My grandson! My darlings, darlings! [*Long embraces.*] What, really Faustina? Faustina here alive? And you are really happy? You love Gabriel?

Faustina

I am happy, Father. I adore my husband and my little son, my lovely little angel. . . . You must see him at once. But is it warm enough here? Such a sweet little body he has. . . . And already he is smiling. And he looks like you! Really, he knows it is his duty to look like you!

Faust [*busying himself at the stove*]

I will make up the fire at once. Don't unwrap him till I have made up the fire. [*The fire begins roaring in the chimney.*] But how was it, Faustina, you hid it all away from me? . . . Oh, no, my dear, I intend no

reproach. No, no, I don't! . . . But why, why? It was such a grief to me!

He again attends to the fire, and then approaches her.

Faustina

Father, I was afraid. You had already chosen me a husband, and you didn't like Gabriel. You were so strong, although so kind. . . .

Faust

Oh, you old tyrant! You made even your own daughter fear you! What of others, then? And yet they endured your tutelage so long! Now, let me see our Henry. Heavens, what a big boy! A monster! A giant!

Faustina

He is three months and four days, and already looks like a half-year-old.

Faust [*taking him in his arms*]

No, I won't let him fall, Faustina! Henry, Henry! . . . Look, he has thrust his little rosy hand into my beard. . . . Henry, my little bud! My new self! You look so wise, and you smile like bliss and love and spring and dawn and hope. . . .

[*Gabriel enters quietly.*]

Gabriel

Duke!

Faust [*looking round*]

Dear son! But what a bad citizen you are! Am I the Duke? I am Doctor Faust, citizen of Trotzburg. Listen, I was talking about your son. He is so wise! Look, and you will see a supreme consciousness in his little face. You will always find it in babies' faces. They already know something of great importance. The same knowledge is in the faces of the silent dead. But neither of them can speak, and we can only read their wisdom in the bright eyes of the babies, and on

the brow and cheeks of the dead. . . . Then, when they learn to speak, the children lose their wisdom—they begin to live and to carry out their work. . . . See, how he smiles! Henry, Henry, your father has come! Ah, he knows you already. How happy you must be!

CURTAIN

SCENE XI

[*The same Square as in the third scene, but deserted except for an occasional passer-by and the guard at the Treasury.*

The merchants Segal and Pfefferschalk are seen leaving the Masons' Guildhouse, they come slowly across the square]

Segal

It's as clear as God's daylight. If we pull the string too hard——

Pfefferschalk

—— it will break.

Segal

Exactly! Our profits indeed have been scandalously cut down; but ——

Pfefferschalk

—— small profits are better than none at all.

Segal

Exactly! And we can frighten the popular assembly by threatening to leave the City for ever; but ——

Pfefferschalk

—— they can tell us: Make the road your dining-table.

Segal

Exactly! I was counting on Tribune Scott's ambition, and expecting great things of to-day's discussion. You were rather hasty with your conclusions.

Pfefferschalk

In a word, he turned us out.

Segal

Exactly!

[*Mephisto, disguised as a monk, comes to meet them.*]

Mephisto

Most honourable merchants, stop a moment to receive my humble blessing. . . . Ha-ha-ha! Don't you know a friend when you see one?

Pfefferschalk

Devil take me if it isn't the Baron!

Mephisto

Sh! Not so loud. . . . What did Scott say?

Pfefferschalk

He played melodrama.

Segal

He was virtue itself!

Mephisto [*shaking his head*]

Then I myself must tackle him. I may say I have full powers from you?

Both

Of course!

Mephisto

Well, until later, then! Here he comes!

[*The merchants leave as Scott, wearing a scarf of red and green over his shoulder, comes down the steps of the Masons' Guild-house. Mephisto approaches him and bows humbly.*]

Mephisto

Will Your Magnificence, the Citizen Tribune, graciously allow me a few words?

Scott [*absently*]

What do you want, monk?

Mephisto

Better if we could go somewhere apart.

Scott [*smiling*]

Secrets?

Mephisto

Of the greatest consequence.

Scott [*on his guard*]

What can you tell me, monk? I am very busy; speak here and briefly.

Mephisto

Let us go to your office. I am the former Alguacil—Baron Mephisto.

Scott [*startled*]

What? I shall order your instant arrest. . . .

Mephisto

If you wish. But you have a head on your shoulders. You will understand that if I show myself in Trotzburg and go straight to William Scott, it is not for frivolous conversation. You will want to know in advance what the business is. . . .

Scott

What is it, then? Long speech between us is unthinkable. If you consider me a person of sense you will spare me your eloquence. To the point, Baron. What do you want with me? Do you come with proposals from Faustulus?

Mephisto

Faustulus is hopeless. His game is up.

Scott [*smiling*]

That we know.

Mephisto

Let us speak definitively. The merchants have decided to leave, and to submit Trotzburg to a commercial embargo.

Scott [*shrugging his shoulders*]

That is not true. I have just been conferring with them. They are, in fact, afraid.

Mephisto

But I have spoken with them since then. Their decision is irrevocable. In the absence of a sufficient fleet of its own, Trotzburg is menaced with famine in a few months. And plenty of troubles in the future, then!

Scott [*arrogantly*]

We shall overcome them!

Mephisto

The masters are discontented with the liberties of the foremen and apprentices. The measures taken by Tribune Bond are ruining all the wealthy citizens—or so they think.

Scott

I know all this, better than you.

Mephisto

I hold full powers from all the merchants of the City, and a good half of the Captains, to suggest a revolution to you. . . . But let us go to your room. It is inconvenient to discuss these matters in the public square.

Scott

Nobody can hear us . . . and it is less suspicious.

Mephisto [*with a malicious smile*]

For my part, I can at once put at your disposal a large sum which I have collected from the foreign enemies of Trotzburg's excessive freedom—and they are not a few! To-night I can hand over to you a million ducats in gold. [*Pause.*] Three days' march away, I have ready in camp four thousand lancers. You can hire them at a moment's notice. William Scott, let us talk like sensible people. We shall not stop short at an offer of the post of Stadhouder. Say the word, and in a very short time you shall be Duke! Put out your hand, and all is yours! You know just who must and can be bought? The extremists, all the foremen and apprentices, you will then overcome at the last moment by force. Do you wish to go on?

Scott [*looking down*]

The devil!

Mephisto

You are not still afraid of the devil?

Scott

Come and see me at night in the garden of the Western Tower . . . at the foot of Cæsar's Statue.

Mephisto

I shall be there.

Scott

The populace is assembling. Van Bond has called a Public Assembly for this afternoon; I have only just been informed of it, and as yet I do not know for what purpose. But, in any event, it is of no consequence.

Mephisto

Keep a sharp lookout!

Scott

We must separate.

[*They go out separately. There come into the square a picturesque and very mixed group of ragged people, among them Rebble and Envie.*]

Rebble

I tell you, it's usurpation! The Tribunes are trying to make themselves absolute.

Envie

That's what they say in the City about the Tribunes.

Rebble

We're getting too orderly. Trotzburg is going to sleep.

[*Mephisto re-enters in the disguise of a travelling musician.*]

Mephisto

That's what I say, too! Instead of one big Duke, are we to have two little ones? And tell me, granny, what about equality?

Envie

What equality have we? True, the rich are heavily taxed, and there is no more starving or begging. But, on the other hand, what endless talk about the love of

labour and all the other virtues! Woe to him in Trotzburg who was born with a generous disposition and loves his leisure! Nowhere else in the world is there so little consideration for those who cherish their own independence and like to be their own master.

Mephisto

And how crafty our benefactors are! Why, until quite recently old Father Rebble used to have crowds thronging round him, and now—now they have even organised a Guild of Black Unskilled Labour and showered their favours on it, and you are almost deserted.

Rebble

Except for this rabble. But right is right!

Mephisto

There's nothing new under the moon. I saw exactly the same thing happen in Italy . . . at Palermo. Yes, and things went even further, there. People there began to take note how the pretended popular authority was taking control of every individual, enacting so-called labour codes and strict communal regulations. So those came to the front who dared to rebel against any order whatsoever.

Rebble

That's the idea!

[*A murmur of approval in his following.*]

Mephisto

They made a good ballad on it at Palermo. I will sing it to you.

[*He sings, accompanying himself on the guitar.*]

A merchant once in Italy
The nobles all evicted:
He bought them up and finally
Crowned himself king, in sovereignty
A monarch unrestricted.

The workers then in turn rebelled,
And downed the merchant-master;
Their State by Labour was upheld,
From each his share of toil compelled,
To make the days speed faster!

But up, dear idlers mine! Arise,
My gentle lazzaroni!
Now, claim your earthly paradise,
Down tools, stroll, loll about likewise,
And eat your maccaroni!

Come, nerve yourselves awhile! And, speak,—
Was ever lord so surly
As your own mates in power, who seek
To spoil six festas in the week
And work you late and early!

Before they rose you lived on tick,—
You starved, but felt the tougher!
No work, no pay now! That's the trick
They play! And Labour makes you sick. . . .
And how the women suffer!

Tear up the paving stones, and take
Your torch! Come, take your coat off!
But first with lord and merchant make
A truce, and they for freedom's sake
Will help you kick your load off.

Come, now, the Fifth Estate, rebel!
Rebel past all revoking!
Let conflagrations crack this shell
Of Earth and crumble it in Hell,
In its own blood still choking.

Envie [*applauding loudly*]

Bravo! Bravo! That's the song to sing them!

Mephisto

I'm a shrewd lad, I am. I know the very first thing to be done is to knock their law and order on the head. And the head of their law and order is the Tribune van der Bond!

[*The assembly bell begins to peal.*]

Mephisto

They are just beginning to assemble for the meeting. We have time to spare. Let us all go and have a drink, and I will tell you the rest of the tale about Palermo.

[*The square begins to fill. The Guilds enter with their banners, led by their masters. The foremen are armed. The merchants, few in number, gather at the foot of the tribune. The Secretaries and Captains of the Republic take their stations on the steps of the fountain, the Elders of the City sitting in armchairs on the upper platform. Then Scott and Gabriel appear, bareheaded, in their green and red scarves.*]

First Elder [*rising*]

Citizens! I herewith declare open a general assembly of the citizens of Trotzburg. It has been summoned by your Tribune, Gabriel van der Bond. What does the Tribune wish to report to the people?

Gabriel

Citizens, for some time our foreign merchants, who are enriching themselves so grossly out of the commerce of Wellentrotz and Trotzburg, have been threatening to cease intercourse with us, because we, by various enactments in the interest of the general welfare, are endeavouring to reduce their scandalous profiteering, and, in a word, do not leave them in peace to plunder us.

[*Jeers and cries of approval from the people.*]

Pfefferschalk

This is revolting! We are being insulted!

A Voice

Silence! We all know what sort of birds you are! [*Laughter.*]

Gabriel

Citizens! It is time we put an end to their threats, once and for all. An honourable seaman, Captain Niklaas, wishes to speak to you on this topic.

[*Niklaas ascends the tribune and takes off his oil-cloth cap.*]

Niklaas

Trotzburg! You are being bamboozled! Three times now I have proposed to Tribune Scott a systematic plan of action. I demonstrated that it is possible to obtain, partly by building, partly by purchase at a very reasonable price, and partly by hire, a fleet of some fifty first-rate ships. In a few months Trotzburg can be its own merchant. We mariners have worked it all out. Now, what does it mean? To the people, not a word has ever been said about this plan! They tell us that you would not be able to provide a sufficient number of competent clerks to purchase corn and other imports and to dispose of your own products. Stuff and nonsense! Haven't the Trotzburghers sound heads on their shoulders? Won't they find friends wherever they go? Yes, we have many enemies—but friends, too. Without any fine talk I'll tell you I'd gladly drown if need be in the service of the City. But why has nothing been done about this plan? Because the City Council has hemmed and hawed about it and forgotten it and left the people exposed to the threats of these arrogant merchants. So, although Tribune van Bond is not in charge of the Marine Department, I approached him with a complaint against his colleague.

[*Uneasy murmurs in the crowd.*]

Segal

I beg leave to speak. By special leave of my good fellow-citizens!

Gabriel [*insistently*]

Citizen First Elder, pray grant special leave of speech to the merchant Segal.

First Elder

The merchant Segal has special leave.

[*Segal mounts the tribune and bows to all sides.*]

Segal

Why so much noise about it? We all the time wanted to declare to-day that we accept all the new laws. There you are! So as to live in peace. We bow to you. [*He bows.*] And do you, if you will, bow to us! And, if you do not want to bow to me,—no matter! Why quarrel about it? Why should you buy ships when we have plenty? And we are your servants? You see? Now it's all settled. [*He comes down the steps.*] So why all this disturbance! As though we had any quarrel with Trotzburg, or what!

[*A triumphant roar of laughter from the people, cheers, a mild jeering.*]

Gabriel [*triumphantly*]

Citizens, great Trotzburg overcomes all its difficulties! This is because it is young and strong. Mortal man gives way to the immortal city. Citizens! Now hear me! I am very conscious that your Tribunes have in these days exhausted their mandate. The war is over. To-day there is no menace on any side. Within the City reign peace and prosperity. We—I and my dear colleague, William Scott—will therefore now hand over our charge into the hands of new Tribunes, and not in any grudging manner. . . . We both beg you to release us. [*He bows in all four directions.*] Release us in peace from our high office.

Scott [*pale and trembling, aside*]

That was not agreed between us, Gabriel!

Gabriel [*aside*]

Make your protest then, if you dare, Scott!

Scott [*aside*]

You have outwitted me.

Gabriel [*aside*]

You will soon be thanking me for it.

[*The people is moved. Uncertain murmurs and agitated talking.*]

First Elder

I beg our worthy and beloved Tribunes to withdraw their resignation.

Voices

Withdraw! Withdraw!

Gabriel

Our decision is irrevocable.

[*Rebble, Envie, Mephisto, and their party have meanwhile joined the crowd.*]

Mephisto

Oh, these sly ambitious statesmen! Look, Father Rebble, how they flatter the people! Truly they are the new Cæsars. Now's the time to do what I said!

[*Rebble impetuously shakes his head as with a sudden resoluteness.*]

Rebble

Grant leave of speech to old Rebble!

First Elder

Citizen Rebble has leave.

Rebble [*mounting the tribune*]

Citizen van Bond, give me your hand. Many a time have I tried to go against you, but you always disarmed me. To-day, again, I had decided to lift my hand against you, as a dangerous man, the people's favourite. But I see you are also honourable. It is grievous to me to have to acknowledge that here among you there is nothing for me to rebel against; but that is what I must now admit. Yet there's plenty for old Rebble to do. All about us slavery still reigns supreme. Farewell, then, good people, citizens of Trotzburg! I go to spread throughout the world your atmosphere of liberty!

The [*A storm of applause, cheers and cries of approval.*]

Mephisto [*hissing in the crowd*]

Curses! Even he fails me! Despair, despair!

Gabriel

Father Rebble! Great, indeed immeasurable, are your services, you foolish, insolent, turbulent demigod! You are our father. For you there is always a place amongst our elders. Papa Rebble, before you go, bless me and Trotzburg!

Rebble [*turning to Gabriel and then to the people*]

My blessing on you who resign authority,—and on you, the free People, my blessing! May you for ever march on!

[*He descends from the tribune in the midst of a touching silence.*]

First Elder

While we are here assembled, I desire to give the artist Dellabella leave to speak; for some time now he has been wishing to say a few words to the people.

[*Dellabella mounts the tribune and bows low.*]

Dellabella

Mighty People, at your command I am building you a Pantheon in which it is your desire that there shall be gathered together the festal symbols of your birth and your life, a temple where also the best of your citizens shall sleep. As yet there is little built, though the work is advancing rapidly. Meanwhile, bearing in mind the City's desire that a prominent place in the monument shall be dedicated to the genius of its founder, I decided to set aside a special altar in honour of the foundation of Trotzburg, with the inscription:

VRBI FAVSTAE FAVSTOQVE VRBANO.

This altar has been built. It has been a labour of love, and to-day it is ready for your inspection. On it there stands my portrait bust in marble of our first and last Duke.

[*Hearty cheers and cries of: Long live Henry Faust! Long live the founder of Trotzburg! Honour, honour to the great!*]

Dellabella

And may the humble artist, although but recently become a citizen, be permitted to say how he wishes that Faust himself may yet return alive to us, and that in good time his dust may be laid to rest beneath that altar!

Gunther Hunt [*in the dress of a secretary, standing on the steps, raises his hand and starts singing*]

Our sovereign city, roused in might,
In Titan strength to reign,—
King Trotzburg in the morning light
Shall throne it o'er the plain!

And he shall tell the Duke: Still lead,—
First citizen thereby;
Be first among your peers indeed,
But sovereign—that am I!

[*The people in chorus repeat the second stanza. As the sound of their voices is ringing out, there appears on the open platform by the balustrade, a tall man, somewhat bowed, in a blue cloak and a broad-brimmed hat that covers his eyes. He hears the verses of the hymn sung to their end, then throws off his hat and opens his pleated cloak. It is Faust. His face is full of joy, his eyes are glistening. The flowing folds of his white robes give majesty to his figure.*

Movements in the crowd, and cries of: Faust! The Duke!]

Faust [*opening his arms as if to embrace the people*]

Children,—my dear, wise, brave children! Greetings to you! Here am I amongst you, with you, face to face with you,—come at your call, to be with you an equal citizen of free Trotzburg! You have taught me how to prize the genius of the people. Long time from the height of my Tower had I been watching, and my heart, from doubt and confusion, passed to tremulous love. Children, brothers, accept me! I have seen and heard how wisely and rightly you have pursued your great resolutions. I have looked upon this populous, motley-hued, mighty, inexplicable being—the crowd, with its flowing stream, its swift movements, and its voices—upon its masses moving like the waters of the

ocean, but informed with reason and alive, alive in all its elemental impulses. Children, brothers, I believe—I believe in you! Gather your harvest, grow, enlighten the world, build, fill it with thought, with understanding, and ye shall be as gods. For the gods are a vision of what the might of men shall be. My greetings to you for this also, that you have solved many of the problems that weighed heavily on me. Terror and doubt have been scattered like clouds before the wind that fade away in the sunset with the last misty veil of death. Yes, I have returned to you, to be with you, to be of use to you, to win your love by mine. That is my wish. Will you accept me?

[*A wild ovation. Cries of Faust! Faust! A great waving of hats and kerchiefs and fluttering of banners. The old Sexton slowly shuffles along in his slippers to Faust, from behind*]

Sexton

Here am I,—here, great Duke! Do you remember the old man? I know the changes to ring when the hour strikes!

[*He smiles craftily, goes down to the door of the bell tower, opens it and enters, his keys jangling*]

Faust

Dear kindly children! I thank you for your thought of me in the memorial. I also have brought you a gift: I have brought with me an iron worker. The Council of the Twelve Masters has already seen him. The Masters will tell you that he lives on fire and water, which render him capable of every kind of movement. He can saw, drill, grind, hew, forge. He can be adapted to move heavy weights on dry land and on the water, in the fields and underground. You will be able to improve upon him at need. His possibilities are endless. The most arduous toil can be accomplished with the help of these fire and water machines, thus leaving you free for finer work, for the pursuit of knowledge, and for the pleasures of life. This is my gift to you, children and brothers, on the day of reconciliation.

[*Loud cheers and cries of delight.*]

Faust

Children, there is now peace for us, a deep full peace. And now,—already past the threshold of old age, now do I feel happiness. The joy grows and swells in my heart. [*Suddenly he presses both hands to his heart, and staggers.*] Children, what is this? What is happening to me? Something unheard of . . . impossible . . . [*Gabriel supports him.*] What now? It is growing, expanding, my heart but lately so poor! Now it embraces you all—all—in itself. And now are in me, part of me, all the pulsations of life. Here, here all the joys of children, the loves of youth, dreams of maidens, husbands' anxieties, mothers' tenderness, the gentle sadness of old age. Here, here is every aspiration, all honour, and the blood of all. Oh, stream,—broad, turbulent stream of marvellous blood flowing into my breast! I can see no bounds to it now! I am you—all of you! I am all others! I am the many, I am the infinitude! And all things—all things I am! Again, once again, what once I felt before, though not with such dizzy power, such overwhelming sweetness. Ah! This—the heavens, the sun, the earth, and we, friends, all this and we are one! There, afar, are the shores of past life, the piteous beginning, the grievous road. . . . And, here, my new home, my future, golden, azure, calling . . . calling me. . . . Let us go, let us go on! There is no death! There is life, so immense, beyond all surmise. . . . Wonderful. . . . Triumphant. . . . What strength . . . what an insurmountable, translucent, glittering, foaming wave. . . .

[*Suddenly the hour strikes decisively While its note still re-echoes the bells begin to sound a carillon, majestic in its pearl-like silvery peals*]

Faust [*with a wide gesture of embrace*]

Life. . . . We. . . . Moment of happiness, abide!

[*He falls on Gabriel's arm. A physician hurries anxiously to his side. Intense silence in the crowd. The carillon of the cathedral bells sings and echoes proudly and triumphantly like a chorus in the heavens above*]

Physician

Faust is dead.

Gabriel

Faust is alive in all things! He lives in us! He lives for ever!

[*Heads are bared. The banners are dipped. The voices of the bells break into louder peals, still more sunny and victorious.*

To slow time and majestically, the people sing their hymn.]

Our sovereign city, roused in might. . . .

[*The curtain is slowly lowered while they sing.*]

THE END

The Magi

A DRAMATIC FANTASY

The Magi

CHARACTERS

Andromenes, Chief of the Magi.

Sempronius,
Prasius,
Amilius,
Rhegius,
Hermonius,
} Magi.

Disciples of the Magi.

Damnius, a boy.

Dorotheus, Abbot of the Monastery of the Sacred Thorns.

Hierodoulos, an old monk.

Theognostos, a young monk.

Other Monks.

Manessa, a Priestess of Apollo.

An Old Woman.

Rek, a denizen of the Nether World.

Other Beings of the Nether World.

Spirit Voices.

Voices of the Salamanders.

An Angel.

The White Angel.

The Steel Angel.

Choir of Those Ascending the Mountain.

Dionysus.

Scenes

Scene 1. *On the Isle of Pharès, the Terrace Garden.*
„ 2. *On the Isle of Pharès, an Alley in the Garden.*
„ 3. *The Nether World.*
„ 4. *On the Isle of Pharès, the Council Room.*
„ 5. *On the Isle of Pharès, the Cell of Andromenes.*
„ 6. *On the Isle of Trézos.*
„ 7. *On the Isle of Pharès, the Garden.*
„ 8. *Manessa's Studio.*
„ 9. *In other Spheres.*
„ 10. *Chamber of Sempronius.*
„ 11. *On the Isle of Pharès, the Terrace Garden.*
„ 12. *The Nether World.*
„ 13. *A Misty Mountain Side.*

SCENE I

Amilius and Sempronius are walking in a garden amidst rose-bushes. Amilius has an elderly appearance, a lofty forehead suggesting baldness, a beard thick and grizzled, eyes of extraordinary calm, very slow in their movements and always wide open. His manner is slow and confident.

Sempronius is still young, but his yellowish face is wrinkled. His eyes glitter with a brightness of excitability; he has a mobile thin mouth; his movements are impulsive; he is always in a fever.]

Amilius

Sempronius, no,—thy self-doubts only seem
Ridiculous to us assembled. For
Thou art our Teacher's pride, our School's adornment.
I often with amazement gaze upon
The explosions of thy genius, those bursts
Of fire invincible; oh, it is almost grievous
To look into those bubbling wells, in which
Thy soul is seething. Nay, how rich thou art,
Sempronius, immeasurably rich. Could envy
Midst the disciples of the holy Mage
Here nestle, then we all should be envenomed
With an o'erwhelming envy of thee—of thee.

Sempronius

I listen, and I ponder, how Amilius,
A mind so splendid, fails to grasp what I
In very truth avail. Or would he thus
Console me? Am I then a child? Ah, no—
But a volcano, a burning fountain, ever
Boiling, straying, surging out the abyss.
Ye Gods! Am I to fashion sweet laudations
That scarcely veil my own censoriousness?
Volcano, say I? Fiery fountain? No,
I would I were a silent lake, wherein
To mirror radiance of the skies above,
If so I may not be the sky itself.
But thou art peaceful. Sacred wisdom, daughter
Of all the harmonies, gleams in thine eyes
Unfaltering, unblinking—No, I'm but

NAWAB SALAR JUNG

An ape! And soon—yea, soon—I shall begin
To play at magic. Ha! Why laughest thou?

[*Rhegius enters hurriedly to meet them. He is young, swarthy, hunchbacked.*]

Rhegius

Teachers,—the prophetess, the wise Manessa,
Will visit us to-day, and the whole school's
Astir with it! We have just heard her ship
Arrived from Milla here this very morning.
Our Father laughed, and said that we should have
Experience thereby. But were Manessa
An angel even, and wiser than Amilius,
Reflect on this, my friends, she is a maiden,
And of rare beauty; it will be strange to see
How this new force may change the crystal's nature
On our own Isle, Pharès,—so strong the force.

Amilius

I am amazed! Our Father must be jesting—
Playing with us. And thou dost say that I
Am calmly wise? No, I'm a pedant only.
But he, our Father . . . oh, weigh this, Sempronius . . .
He is inscrutable; the prophetess
Manessa, and all of us—the world, the demons,
The gods—are unto him but toys. And he
Is earnest in his playing as children are.
He is a child. He laughs—he is so wise.

Sempronius

Manessa? Ah, I am aflame to see
This famous seeress of Christ's foe, Apollo.
Yet, stay! Whose singing do I hear?

Amilius

Who sings
There, Rhegius?

Rhegius

It is the neophytes,
Whose choir now greets the marvellous Manessa,
And chants to her afar a hymn of praise
The Sage has written in her honour.

Amilius

The sage once more is turning poet? Strange!
For fifteen years now he has writ no verse,
Nor touched the lyre.

Rhegius

This hymn he had all ready.
He has been teaching it to Hermonius
Who sang it with the youths;—but listen now,
How well it sounds.

Amilius

Quite well.

Sempronius

Quite well, too well!

HYMN

By wisdom's road, on paths of asperity,
On the strait causeway of austerity,
These my disciples do I guide.
One goal they seek, oh beauteous maiden; may
They touch the hem of Beauty's raiment, they
Are satisfied.
I have prepared them; they, with veneration,
Shall all acclaim the Ray of revelation;—
Thyself reveal!
They are the seekers, thou the radiance;
Come, hear our hymnal of obeisance,—
Passion's appeal!

Sempronius

A mawkish hymn, I swear! This from our Sage!
Such flattery! A sort of madrigal!
A child had done as well! But if Manessa
Is wise, she will shrug her shoulders!

Amilius

Strange indeed!

Rhegius

How beautiful must be this prophetess
To whom the Holy One himself writes lays.

SCENE II

[*Another alley in the same garden. Sempronius enters quickly. A small boy, Damnius, meets him.*]

Damnius

Sempronius, not that way! She's at the port,
And I am running to see her. Hasten!

Sempronius

Thou fool! I am not looking for Manessa;
I seek my solitude.

[*Damnius stops in astonishment. Then he continues on his way.*]

Sempronius

Manessa!
So excited are they all, that now my pride
Of heart has changed my purpose. Let this farce
Distract the Father; I will play no part
In it! Here, on this hidden bench I'll sit
And force my mind to dwell on cold geometry.
Sit down, Sempronius! Yes, that is right. Now, take
Thy stick. Now, analyse these triangles.

[*Sempronius becomes absorbed in his drawing. Suddenly, through flowering bushes, Manessa enters, parting them with her white arms, and looks at him with a smile. He does not notice her*]

Manessa

Sempronius!

Sempronius

Who is it? Thou—Manessa?
I should have known thee! But why art thou here?—
I see—our Teacher is testing us.—And I
Am all confused! So—jeer at me! For I
Am at a loss. Should I now curse thee, as
A peril that invades my circles, like
The murderer that came on Archimedes,
Or should I else be courteous, celebrating
Thee with pæans,—rival the flattery,
So mawkish, wherewith thou wast heralded
E'en by our Teacher 'midst our neophytes?

Manessa

Thou art Sempronius? That pleases me!
I like to catch big beetles. And, Sempronius,
I see thee eager for temptation—but
I will not tempt thee . . . No,—thy hand, my friend;
And bare to me thy soul. Inquisitive
Am I indeed, nor can Manessa spend
Much time here. So—thou art ambitious?

Sempronius

I am; I am ambitious. I would even
Surpass the teacher.

Manessa

And—a wealth of thought
Mars the pulsations of a passion, too?

Sempronius

Disquietude can mar it. Oh, Manessa,
I want a little ice to cool my fever,
An iron ring to coop my heart, which beats
So hard, my poor sick heart! I want repose!
Were I Amilius, I should now be climbing
The road that leads on high.

Manessa

Oh, my good friend!
Good friend, cast off pretensions thou shouldst soar
So high. Thou hast no wings. Yet be not wroth.
Get thee support amongst the astral demons.
Be great—be great! For this thou canst be—great;
But good thou canst not be. Be bold, Sempronius,—
Evil!

Sempronius

But thou—how good thou art!

Manessa

Do thou
Be boldly evil! Like the Spirit of Darkness,
Grapple in stern conflict with the Teacher.

Trust to my wisdom ; all is in strength, in strength,—
Not in the budded flower. Yea, yea, believe me ;—
I am not tempting thee. Thou art my friend ;
A sister's counsel I am giving thee.
I prophesy that thou wilt quell the Teacher
Till he own thee the stronger. Thou art great ;
But choose thy pathway. To the fish, the sea—
Not flights aerial.

Sempronius

How wise thou art !
How beautiful !

Manessa

Do so, and willingly
Will I be thine when thou art conqueror.

Sempronius

Oh, what a fool—a fool—I was to shun thee !

Manessa

Let us press hand to hand !

Sempronius

A kiss, a kiss !

Manessa

When thou art conqueror.

Sempronius

The Teacher comes.

Manessa

What tells thee that ?

Sempronius

The beating of my heart.

[*The sage Andromenes enters along the path, a white dove on his shoulder. He has ornate garments, and his grey head is wreathed in ivy. His white beard is fantastically tied with a flaming golden ribbon. His old age is fresh. He is smiling. He stops, and looks at Sempronius and Manessa with affectionate irony.*]

Manessa

Thou seest, Saint, we are already friends.

Andromenes

I see that thou already art guiding him.

Manessa

On the true path. But, thy disciple, he
Had found his own true path without my aid.

Andromenes

His own true path! Yea, wisely dost thou speak.
For, truly, wiser folk too often seek
The one true path. His own true path,—yes, this
Is the seeker's goal.

Sempronius

Is, then, for each of us
His own path to salvation?

Manessa

For each one
There is a path that leads to perfecting
The motley manifest of his own soul.

Sempronius

But in these perfectings, souls are not equal.
Is it thus?

Manessa

Souls indeed are manifold;
But each in flower is beauty.

Sempronius

And each good?

[*Manessa smiles, Andromenes laughs gently.*]

Sempronius

Why deem ye me a child? The thought is clear.
Then evil in flower is beauty. Is't not thus?
And strength serves as the gauge for lofty minds
That can outgrow at once both good and evil.

Manessa

Yes, and yet no. But why out-riddle that ?
Thou carriest thy fate writ on thy hand,
Thy path fore-featured there, thy destiny,
Which thou art bounden to pursue, if thou
Willest to give what thou canst give. But that,
Whether it shall be noble, shall be blessed,
Is not for thee to ordain ! Man is a mock
Contemptible who wears another's garb.

Andromenes

It was not idly that I decked my hair
With ivy, plaited my beard, bethought me of
My harp and to pour out as once of old
My speech in poesy. This mine isle, Manessa,
Breathes mystery. Tempt thou my anchorites !
Shine like the sun, and let what will shoot up,—
Blossom of purple or blue, with fragrance fresh
Or dizzying, or with sweet golden fruit,—
Or may-be berries flushed with poisoned death.
Thus well, methinks, do I assort my garden ;
Me-seems, the sun that shines on it not only
Will quicken harvests grown for use or joy,
But that the flowering of my plants shall be
Beautiful, bloom what may.—And we, Manessa,
We both love beauty.

Sempronius

Holy master mine,
Dost thou not dread there grow some evil weed
To poison thine own breath in breathing it ?

Andromenes

May-be that in my garden there will grow
A plant with gaudy foliage which will bloom
Into a cup with lovely, languid perfume,
To drench the air around it with my death.
Then my grey head will swirl in a sweet maze,
And I shall drop down into earth's bosom ; then,
With song for Heaven's ears, my immortal spirit
Shall wrench its way to freedom from my corse.

I know the holy judges will not let me
Be wafted straight from earth into the Fire ;
But I shall linger bodiless near earth—
For this offence, that I have loved too well
Mankind and animals and vegetation,—
Crystals,—the frame of things,—water,—the air,—
The twinkling stars,—the sunrise and the sunset,—
The melancholy moon,—the bitter-sweet
Refrain of earthly tragedy,—the throb
And habit of semi-spiritual flesh,—
The flowering and the wilting in the glide
And drift of Time. I know, too, that the spirit
Even more mightily will be torn asunder
Between its yearning for its home of Fire
And memory of earthly tribulations—
Of mankind's patterned uniform of life.

Manessa

Thus, even thus, great master !—My soul lies
Humble at foot of thine, its younger sister.
Wherefor then should we fear ? Our sight hath pierced
The curtain of the temple, and hath seen
The kindliness of God's own smile. And, truly,
The play is noble, and yet more engrossing
When weighted down in terror half-dissembled,
In torture from without, which cannot harm
Our self in its reality.

Sempronius

How confident ye are ! But I,—but I . . .
Perhaps ye are preparing for me slyly
The part of Judas.—Why am I so black ?
Why have ye not in love washed my soul pure ?
All that is black strong love can purify.
Whither would ye then drag me ?—Oh, thy smile,
Father, is terrible—as when thou gazest
On the green pond where pike devour the dace.
And thou, Manessa ? What ? Thou smilest, too ?
With friendship thou enticest me, and crafty
Pledgest thyself to me, provokest me

To strife with him, my Teacher! To a flame
Thou blowest up my vaulting dreams of pride!
Whither now drag ye me? Would play with me?

Andromenes

Boy, bring me here my harp.

Sempronius

Would he now sing?

Voices behind the Stage

The Master would now sing.

[*The stage fills with disciples, the older ones in white dress, and the younger in ornamented dress. The boy brings a golden harp. Manessa sits by Andromenes and listens, leaning her chin on her beautiful hand, her dark hair low down on her forehead. The whole scene is sunlit. The clouds are effaced in the blue sky. The birds hush. Clusters of flowers, white and lilac, rock to and fro, listening. Andromenes sings.*]

Create thyself! I bless this gay device.
The powers' creative play I glorify.
I shall exalt it, high in Paradise,
When I shall die.
I am at ease. In Hell will I indite
A prayer, where souls in voiceless fire are tossed,
If, in a passing dream, I lived life's fight,
And played and lost.
I found in ocean's dark abysses and took thence
A talisman, a pearl which none shall have
from me,
Whereby, through masks, obscureness, frank-
incense,
The actors' faces I can see.
Lead, dancer—lead thy dance of suffering,
Or a victorious pæan!
My hands shall ever clap thy triumphing,
Great god Pan!
The spiral choir, the whirling at the feast,
Let us all dance; beauty is all around.
Praise be to Thee for beauty in the beast,

For poverty with lustre crowned.
I love the veil broad-flung upon my sight,
The veil of day's imperious sweep;
But if death should disclose the depths of night,
Or e'en of sleep,
Or e'en a sleep, quite visionless,—nay, more—
An emptiness of space,—
My flaming soul shall whisper, 'I adore
Thy wondrous grace!'

[*He is silent. They all stand deeply pensive. Sempronius wrings his hands silently and leaves in haste.*]

SCENE III

[*In the background a ladder of innumerable steps, the top of which is lost in the heights. A dim light shines from above, but everything is misty. In the deep crevices and burrows something is bustling. Rek, who has imbecile eyes and is covered with fur, enters and drinks from a pool, scooping up the water in his ape-like hand*]

Rek

Once again light-streaks a-flare,
Stirring restless moan and groan
Of my evil neighbours there.
Out, brief gleam, and let us keep
Darkness in our narrow lair,—
In vast movelessness of sleep
Rest forever unaware!

Voices

My closed eye aches fearfully!—
Mine has long since ceased to see!—
Someone's singeing my grey back!—
Who is't wakes our suffering?—
Pains wrack me, of all hells King.—

[*Out of other dens there can be heard a bellowing and roaring, an indistinguishable murmur Sempronius descends the ladder cautiously*]

Sempronius

Silence, ye beasts! And be ye hushed, ye vermin!

[*He steps off.*]

Here I breathe easily! My thoughts are calmer.
Now to find Rek, that idiot brutish man!

Rek

Thou'rt here again!
Thou wilt torture me!
I fear thine eyes,—
I fear thy hands!
Thou wilt look again,
And move thy hands,

I shall sleep once more ;
Then when I return,
I shall gnaw at stones,
I shall batter my head
In suffering,—
But why ?

Sempronius

Silence, thou cur ! Now sit in front of me,
And stare into mine eyes. Silent ? And still !
So, gaze to gaze surrendered ! Now I touch
Thy low flat brow with Jupiter's strong finger,
And thou wilt sleep . . . Thou sleepest . . .
Yes, he sleeps.—
Now, Spirit of the Depths, into this body
Enter, and hearken me, then speak. I know
Thou lov'st not loss of time, or waste of words.
Ah, now those eyes have opened, and I see
No turbid look, but like a lioness's
The green of those grave eyes is clear and fiery,
And black the dauntlessly deep pupils stare ;
Their vision passes through me, beyond . . . But
whither ?
Into myself ? To the unknown ? I love
Thine eyes, my Rek, when thou art thus transformed !
I love thine eyes, and I could sit here thus
A hundred years in front of thee, and steep
My gaze in thy sage tranquil countenance . . .
But, to the point ! I am resolved now. 'Tis
Writ in the stars. To me is power ordained.
And I shall be the king of all the Magi ;
Like a red comet shall my banner wave
Across black skies.—Further, 'tis known that I
Must kill the Teacher—and I shall do it. So,
Tell me, now when at last the will cries ' Ready,'
Is there no hindrance ? Oh, I know that I
Shall suffer fearsome torment. Well, what then ?
Desist ? I am impelled to it by the lure
Of fame, and by the red mouth of Manessa.
What then ? To wed the glamour of renown,
And bite her lips with tyrant-love's sharp kiss—

And then? What then? To suffer! That is the doom!—
To flash, a quiver of purple sparks, and then
Into the dark be flung, a smouldering firebrand.
But flash I will, wilt thou grant strength to me!
Shall I accomplish?

Rek [*after a long pause*]

Yes!

[*The whole abyss is filled with smoke. Shrieks are heard, then the noise of terrible voices. Silence; a vapour gathers, thick, of a bluish-yellow*]

SCENE IV

[*The Mages' Council Room. It is a half-open veranda on two sets of strong pillars. One of each pair is red, the other blue. The front of the stage is filled with a garden of flowering plants, approached from the veranda by a broad staircase.*

Some of the older disciples are already sitting on the marble bench of the veranda. Others are walking in groups round a lofty chair.

Amilius is conversing with Prasius. Prasius is very thin, blue-eyed with a forehead markedly pale, and has golden locks.]

Amilius

Oh, Prasius, of a woman—canst thou speak
Thus of a woman ? Surely thou art no foe
To the weaker half of generation,—thou,
So generous of heart that thou dost fondle
The very animals, and the more readily
Hadst known the love of women, had the Teacher
Not barred them from this isle of stillness. Yet
Now, and for this, more worthy still is she,
Godlike Manessa, of thy gentleness.

Prasius

Yet did the Master hitherto permit
No woman here, Amilius. Why, then,
Resolved he thus to love men more than women ?
I, I can love a lion or a horse,
But hold and keep them by me, that I will not.
They say that women can redeem the soul.
From afar, then ; jointly to seek salvation
Were hard. The Demiurge created sex ;
Sex has no function in eternity.
Where death is, birth must be ; and both are but
Defections of the flesh—with this distinction,
That death is loathsome, whilst the heat of love
Enraptures and, with birth, involves the capture
Of soul and flesh at once. And so, my friend,
Not purposeless is passion so inflamed,—
Not vain fierce jealousy, passion's close warder

And bitterest fruit of all hell's covetousness.
Truly, Manessa is wise. But, were she radiant
With no such magic beauty,—hovered there
No shrewd cajolery upon her lips,—
In her brown eyes blazed no fires Aphrodisiac,—
Nay, but it is so!—more, were she a vestal
Heroine like my sister Thekla,—still
I should hold her a vessel of temptation.

Amilius

I had not thought the saintliest of all
Our brethren here were so accessible
To the influence of fleshly beauty.

Prasius

No!
I am not accessible—and that, because
I watch myself. I am severe, unbending,
With all such promptings of my heart. I know
How ready 'tis to unlock its gates. I stand
On guard, a sentry unrelieved, fixing
His keen cold glance upon the rampart there.
But the unvigilant shall surely perish
Through this Manessa's evil spirit. What though
In her 'tis unintended, yet is it
There, always there, as in a lapdog.

Amilius

Stay!
Sempronius—look!—clad all in black and purple!
His cloak new, fastened with a gaudy clasp!

Prasius

He is a danger now. He is possessed.
Erstwhile he strove, but now he has delivered
Himself unto the demons.

Amilius

Prasius,
I deem it strange that thou, the best of us,
Should also be so bitter.

Prasius

He alone
Loves virtue that hates evil.—But, farewell ;—
My friends are here, and among them Johannes.
Last night they promised to reflect upon
Job's well-side converse with his wife. They call me.

[*Prasius moves away. The hunchback, Rhegius, immediately comes up to Amilius.*]

Rhegius

Oh, kind Amilius, pray give me one—
One moment of your counsel, only one . . .

Amilius

What is it ? Thou art weeping ?

Rhegius

Weeping !

Amilius

Why ?

Rhegius

I am a hunchback . . .

Amilius

Yet Rhegius, Rhegius . . .

Rhegius

I am a hunchback, but I am not blind . . .

Amilius

Oh, Rhegius !

Rhegius

No, I am not blind. Unhappy
That I am not ! But hear me ! Hear—then slay me !
Oh, why are we not stern, as the black monks
Of yonder island are. Oh, why are we
Not scourged and starved as they ! Would I were scourged,—
Tortured ! That were a measure of relief !

Our Master, why hath he not closed our hearts
To iniquitous seducement—by decree ?
My heart, at least ? May we, the Magi, wed
At will ? Surround ourselves with scores of maidens ?
Is that allowed ? Oh, then, the worse for us !
I see this terrible beauty, and—oh !—my soul
Bursts open and my body is on fire.
How shall I live ? For I am all desire,
Carnal desire,—beastlike, Amilius,—
Foul and disgusting. On my couch last night
I was encompassed all about with visions
Most horrid, shameful. Yet something remained
Still proud and pure within my heart—something
That groaned with pain ;—and then its groan was quenched
By the wolfish howl of lust . . . Amilius,
I dare not now approach the Master, dare not—
The Holy Master . . . But she—she comes, Manessa,
Accursèd . . . and desired ! I go, or else
The fiend will gain control of me and I
Shall be shown shameless here before you all.
Away !

[*He runs off.*]

Amilius [*looking after him*]

Oh, pitiful !

[*Andromenes suddenly comes up to Amilius from behind the bushes.*]

Andromenes

How grand he is !

Amilius

Master, thou here !

Andromenes

How hot the fire consumes him !
Which now were well, sage friend,—to bid Manessa
Clasp him, this hunchback, to her bosom,—lavish
Caresses, feed and lull his hungry love ?

Or, let him molten burn in his hot passion,
And in some feat pour forth torrential lava ?
Such passion cannot be unfruitful ; either
'Tis tempered, or converted to an act
Portentous. But here is Manessa now . . .
This question we will put in solemn council.—
My brother Magi, let our flutes now sound
A Mellic melody, and so to our seats !
And while the music plays, take thought ; thereafter
We will debate this matter earnestly,
And in the presence of divine Manessa.

[*The drawling refrain of a flute is heard. The Magi move to their seats. The tribune, in the midst of the flowers, remains empty, each speaker in turn ascending it. The Father sits in the centre of the veranda on the throne. Manessa approaches him, as if to sit at his feet.*]

Andromenes

Nay, on the throne, Manessa, sit ; more fit
Were it that I at thy feet sat !

Manessa

Nay, beauteous,
Suffer me to be thy slave this while.

Andromenes [*laughs*]

Manessa,
How dear to me thy guile ! Thy guileless guile—
Thou knowest how translucent ! Even as is
Thy silvery apparel dear to me,—
The bracelets on thy wrists and feet, the heavy
Necklace on thy soft bosom, the woven cover
Of thy rebellious hair. Yea, guilelessly
Dost thou bedeck thyself, Manessa. Yet,
Fairer a hundred times more wouldst thou be,
Wert thou to cast off all thine ornament
And shine before us in thy nakedness,
Whiter than Phryne. But, to me, Manessa,
Still greater joy it were didst thou put off
Thy fragrant earthly body, and show thyself
Naked in iridescent astral form,
Enrapturing with charm of starry flesh

Even the very wisest of the wise.
For body is but a garment, clouding vision,
Hiding the spirit that would dazzle us—
Our eyes unready—didst thou radiate
Thy light into the gloom of wingless souls.

Manessa [*covering her face with her hands*]

Sweet, sweeter than the flute, this flattery!
Lo, with a golden spider-web of words
Hast thou enchained me. Sing to me, my spider,—
Sing me my life, my Sage. For I adore
Thy genius.

Andromenes [*laughs*]

My genius is waiting
In its coarse chrysalis; my wings are trembling—
Wings of a blue and golden butterfly.

Manessa

Oh, I adore thy genius!

Andromenes

Soon shall we wed, with the all-lustrous wreath
Of great Apollo—there beyond, Manessa.

Amilius

None now can hear their words; their very tones
Merge in a garland with the singing flute.

First Disciple

The Holy Father's dove begins to sing.

Second Disciple

Look where that bush of lilies has now flowered.

Third Disciple

Look, in the sky, although it is daylight
A star has glittered with a diamond gleam.

Fourth Disciple

Look, are not the great Master's eyes like stars?

Fifth Disciple

Are not Manessa's wondrous hands like lilies ?

Amilius

Mysterious and sacred is their speech.—

Hermonius

To-night the flute hath charmed our hearts ; the sages
Are silent. Good Amilius, will the Master
Reprove me if I sing now to the flute ?
Thou knowest he loves my voice.

Amilius

Sing on, Hermonius.

Sempronius [*on the other side of the veranda*]

How shall I hold my tears ? Oh, bitterness !
And now Hermonius prepares to sing !
They torture me with beauty . . .

Hermonius [*sings*]

I reflect not,—
And I know nought,—
With the flute I sing to thee ;
Like a flow'ret,
White and simple
Flow'ret 'neath a dark pine tree.

And my verses,
Unentrancing
As a sip of water cold,
Are as peaceful
As the rustling
When the tree-tops gently scold.

Mage and master,
Thou art passing,
And maybe wilt hear the beat,
As a garland
Of word-music
That a mage lays at thy feet.—

Hyacinths here,
Bathed in moonlight;
Corals from the deep-sea bed;
Scents of resin,—
Of wild strawberry,—
Mirth of saints high overhead.

Pure white marble,—
Pale blue twilight,—
Healing mead's translucency;
Sound of speaking,—
Summer lightning,—
Corn-ears hanging heavily.

Hard is easy,—
Far is near now,—
To full compass hearts expand;
Bliss awaits thee,—
Brimming chalice,—
God attends on thy command.

[*A long pause. Sempronius sobs, bites his hand, and is silent*]

Andromenes

Let us begin debate.

Amilius

The Magi all
Are strung to great endeavour; name the theme,
Andromenes, that thou hast set to-day.

Andromenes

This is the theme:—But stay now, where is Rhegius?
I see him yonder! That red thorn-bush there,
With prickly boughs conceals him from our view;
But he can hear us.—This, then, is the theme:—
Whene'er our passion kindles with the flame
Of Aphrodite the Omnipotent,
Which course shall profit better of these twain:
To mount the throne of love despotic,—harness
Joy triumphant unto our chariot;—
Or pine and burn, shed tears and blood, unmanned,—
Yet grip the heart in adamantine claws
Of will, eyes raised to the zenith, and so forge

Into a song or feat heroic, all
The measureless regret, the unmeasured yearning ?—
This is the theme—a wide one. Is love, then,
The road to golden bliss and sweet content,
Or—the disease that generates the pearl ?
The first of us to speak shall surely be
Our Prasius.—Oh, Manessa, friend of mine,
In all our treasure we have nought more precious
Than this austere and beatific spirit ;
The sacred discipline sits beautiful
Upon his countenance,—in very truth
Athene's self, snow-pure, stern-eyed, firm-lipped.

Prasius

The Master's word is law, and I obey.
I had not spoken else. I must premise
That I in such themes am not versed,—am not
Acquainted in Armida's courts,—yet speak.
Love's happiness !
Ah, yes,—there is a happy love, which but
The shadow of the flesh clouds and pollutes.
For love is fleshless ; so is happiness.
To utter in one breath the mystic words
Of Love and Happiness with the coarse terms
Of passion, lust and flesh, is grossly wrong.
What—what can passion's wedding e'er confer ?
Brutish appeasement for one moment, then
A melting of that fever—bred of hell
Although so beauteous—as Passion known.
That road is always dreary. There the fiend
Has gilt the melancholy of the void.
He whose clear eyes can pierce the enchanted veil,
Abominates, and forthwith turns from it.—
Then, what is passion unconsoled ? Disease !
I wonder that our Teacher seems to hope,
Out of a savage ailment, or its grave,
Some fruit should grow of medicinal balm,
Or higher principle ! No,—from that grave
Passion will rise anew, an evil ghoul,
And strangle life. Heed how ye play with fire,—
And may the angel of virginity
With his cool wing fan all our hearts to peace !

PAUSE

Andromenes

Manessa, truly I said we have no treasure
Dearer than Prasius here upon Pharès.

Manessa

Thus do they speak upon the neighbouring isle
Of saintly Dorotheus, those black monks.

Andromenes [*smiles*]

And well! A marvellous orchard he has planted,
My dear and blissful brother Dorotheus.
And wonderful his flowers. . . . But only white
Are there desired—lilies, jasmines,
The milky lilac, and the shy may-lily,
And many others. . . . Wondrous is the white
Garland the wise and blessèd father offers
To God,—to God who loves sweet posies well.
But God smiles, turns his eyes away, and asks
The Archangels: "Where are the other colours?
Hath light no other aspect now on earth?"
Archangel Raphael then also smiles,
In answer pointing his palm wand at my
Own modest flower-garden.—Now, Manessa,
Hear my Amilius speak,—my pale blue flower.

Amilius

In harmony of worlds do I believe,
And in a cosmos boundless and magnificent.
As the Creator hath designèd me,
That and no other I too wish to be.
The Lord he made the brilliant lightning flash,
And then, to make the brilliance brighter, he
Needed and wrought deep shadow. Such a shadow
Be my life, then—let sorrows of my heart
But serve this way the beauty of the universe.
The Lord he fashioned wondrous melody,
Triumphantly resolving broken notes
And false discords. Then let my every sigh
Be as the leading note for wondrous chords—

So my woe serve the beauty of the universe.
The Lord he built himself a stately statue;
Would he exalt it on a pedestal
Made of coarse clods of earth, then let my fate
Be chaos,—brutish let me be and shapeless,
May I but take my part in the support
Of a perfection,—so my formlessness
Shall this way serve the beauty of the universe.
If it shall please the Lord to touch me with
His finger and rouse a flaming in my soul,—
So be it. Should he wish that I resound
With clarion tones of victory and triumph,—
That I should win me her whom I desire,—
So be it. Or if he wish that, like a flute,
My soul sob out a lonely serenade
Yearning at doors, fast locked, of the one lady,
For ever inaccessible,—so be it.

PAUSE

Andromenes

Menessa, truly I said that like blue skies
Above us so serene is my Amilius —
Look on this flower of bloodlike purple now,
Entrancing, fragrant as the piercing clove!
Sempronius, we await the sound of thy
Harsh voice and stabbing wisdom.

Sempronius

I will speak.
I will refute Amilius. Has then God
A use for slavelings so contemptible?

[*A stir among the Magi*]

Yes, yes, contemptible! Amilius
Is colour,—he is a clod of earth,—he is
A note or an ethereal vibration,
A stone obedient to feet that trample!
But were I God,—
I would create around me millions
Of demons disobedient to my will,
So that I might rejoice in their wild freedom;

I would wage war on them, and conquer them,
And be their sovereign. Conquest is so sweet!—
Obedience wearies me. But when a proud
Fair champion threatens me with brow uplifted,
Haughtily flings his gauntlet,—when I seize him
By his thick locks, bend his white neck, and kneel
On his stout shoulders, crushing his resistance
To earth, his face in dust,—when I can plant
My foot on his heart, that beats with wrath and curses,—
When I can stare with eyes that godlike laugh
Into the flaming hatred of his own,—
Then I can live!—Yes, were I God! And that
Is what God is; I tell you this, ye sage
Poltroons! And that, I say, is what God is!
But I—I am not God. But let him shatter
The rebel upsweep of my eagle's wings,—
Still I rebel. Planting my foot of brass
On mountain steps, Peleon on Ossa piled,
I shall ascend the ladder of dizzy might
Until Yah-ve—or Zeus—shall fling me down.

And love? Love is but power!—Love, unappeased,
Is as a spur to strong volition's steed;
But love appeased becomes our steed unspurred,
Our champion the White Horse, who then obeys
The bridle and becomes our living throne.—

Enough of words! Enough! Now in my breast
Forces incalculable surge exultant.

The sword, the thunder's chariot, mine I crave!
To fight and win, thus I aspire!
I yearn for wounds,—to smite Kings to their grave,—
To leave black embers on my trail of fire!

I crave a crown, the purple—I require
To change all limits;—mine be for my loins
A lioness enslaved to my desire!
Be there no law save what my will enjoins!

Give me the sword, the sword! Bring weapons, ho!
Let my hands wield them! Ah, I yearn to slay!—
I, I will quaff my cup of destined woe—
Kiss ye the sword, salute the sword! Obey!

[*He falls limply on the bench.*]

Andromenes

Nay, be ye calm, my holy sages all!
Wherefor this stir? Our good Sempronius
Is overcome. He has excess of power.
Look—he has fainted—he is ill. Go, Teucer,—
Give water to our warrior of day-dreams!

[*A boy gives Sempronius a goblet of water. Sempronius drinks.*]

Andromenes

Let us continue our debate. Come, Rhegius,—
Hide not thyself away beyond yon bush,
But tell us what thy youth now thinks. In thee
There breathes the gentle throb of mystery
Which is begotten in the spring. But how,
My hapless Rhegius, thou art burning now!
Wise thou shalt not be; strength thy will shall drain
From that source whence thou drinkest thy sweet bane.

[*Rhegius staggers out from the bush, halts, clasps his hands over his head, and cries out with a sob in his voice.*]

Rhegius

Maness . . . . !

[*He runs away.*]

PAUSE

Andromenes

Much wisdom have ye uttered in debate;
Yet, save for that one cry, nought truly great.

SCENE V

[*Andromenes' cell. It is all in darkness, except for a faint light on a desk to the front of the stage, on which also are a number of large manuscripts open. Silence. A vibration of sound like a very high note of a violin.*]

First Voice

To-day!

Second Voice

To-day!

First Voice

God's will be done alway.

PAUSE

First Voice

We must release him, to our grief.

Second Voice

To greet him is our sweet relief.

First Voice

Love him! We loved him as our own.

Second Voice

To him the Rose-way we have shown.

First Voice

The Bridgehead he hath found and won.

Second Voice

Beneath the Cross may he march on!

First Voice

We grieve to fill his cup with woes.

Second Voice

He wins seers' purple through death's throes.

[*A soft but harsh note, suggesting a horn. The flame goes out and rekindles. Sempronius suddenly appears He is all in black. There is nothing to be seen but his deathly white face and his hair, like Medusa's snakes*]

Sempronius

Omnipotent am I now! I have subdued
The Astral! See these purple lozenges
Of evil blood-red bristle, shaped like hooks,
That wave around;—and see these yellow spheres,
Shameless and lustreless, that hang in bunches;—
These pliant black-haired stalks that wreathe and writhe,
Jeering in ominous silence! And thou there,
Huge, beast-like outline, with a cone-shaped back
And squames, so like the comb of a huge cock,
And blood-stained! But thy head, thine eyes? Where are they?
Ye all in shape resemble common things.
And that? A box, ridiculously rolling
From side to side! And this? A pot, but it
Has burst its neck with thirst!—Oh, my keen gaze,
Thou piercest the horizon to its depths,
So sharp thy keenness now!—But what art thou?
A fiend, confusedly so like a man?
Yes, thou hast blind white eyes of ivory;
Yet blind thou art not;—me canst thou well see!—
So tremble, ye droll and awful! I, the mage,
Sempronius, stand here; so, tremble ye
Before my lilac pentagram, made of
The carcase of a noble will!—But hark!—
Those steps? Manessa!

[*He sits on a bench half seen on the other side of the fire. Manessa appears, clothed only in a flowing mass of hair, but, save for the outline of her face and long eyes and ebony hair, nothing is to be seen of her, except one white shoulder and a semi transparent arm, which looks blue, and curls round slowly.*]

Manessa

Sempronius, wilt thou do it?

Sempronius

Yes! But hear me!
Art thou preparing me a snare?—perchance
Nought but my ruin? My full recompense
Wilt thou assuredly give? More than rewards

Of power,—more than all the dread and terror
Of my new godhead,—thee do I desire—
My slave!

Manessa

So be it!

Sempronius

More powerful than the Teacher
Now am I! He is mine! I shall but look
At him, and he will die; his blood will cease
To flow before my gaze omnipotent;—
Yea, the soft texture of the thinnest threads
Within his brain, with my consuming lightning
Will I shrivel!

Manessa

So be it!

Sempronius

Thou holdest me
In awe?

[*Manessa nods, and looks at him without averting her gaze.*]

Sempronius

Vouchsafe to me, then, this one pledge,—
One great assurance. Bow thy tressèd head
Before me,—let me see Manessa's head
Bent in obeisance to me! Bow—bow down!

[*He rises and stretches out his hand in an attitude of command. Manessa bows low and her hair falls in a stream of black in front of her face. One minute passes.*]

Manessa [*rising*]

The silence sings. The tensile air is strained.—
The very aether breaks 'neath the strain of waiting.

Sempronius

The Master comes now. I will hide.

Manessa

He comes?

Sempronius

Yea, for my heart-strings quiver like a dove.

Manessa

Thou quailest ?

Sempronius

I will do it !

Manessa

Else he were
A craven, that Sempronius, not a mage !

Sempronius

Sempronius is a god !

[*Sempronius vanishes and Andromenes appears at almost the same instant. The light becomes stronger. Manessa is only dimly seen, but Andromenes is in full sight. His ornamental costume glitters with gold. His silvery head is beautiful.*]

Andromenes

Thus far ! These are the depths ! I only wait
To tread the Bridge. Or on wings shall I fly ?
The head, earth-wonted, is too apt to reel.

Manessa

The hour of birth is come ; in anxious dread
I now prepare to cover up mine eyes
Lest I be dazzled when the light is born.

Andromenes

But, tell me why so strange a bark is sent
For this my voyage ?

Manessa

Thou hast been too happy,—
Too much beloved. Taste this cup of pain
For one brief moment,—drink this cup of hate !

Andromenes

The salamanders now begin their chant.

Manessa

And in the accents of our own speech.

Andromenes

Listen!

THE SONG OF THE SALAMANDERS

Whence thy light,
Whence thy light,
God of black and red and white?
Fire, blow bright,
Fire, glow bright;
Steed of black and red and white.
Crests and wings,
Crests and wings,
Who first leapt to eternal things?
Overthrown,
Scorched and prone,
Is one 'stablished lightning-throne.
Ne'er may we,
Ne'er may we
Peer into profundity.
Nor may we,
Nor may we
Heights above us ever see.
Flames around,
Flames around,
Life for us thus pent and bound.
Who may mark?
None may mark
Bounds against a gold-red spark.
Thou wilt hie,
Thou wilt fly
To the truth, or to a lie?
Youth, farewell!
Brother, farewell,
There in paradise to dwell?
There with God,
There with God,
Burn thy body to the sod.
Till thy soul, from dust and ashes,
Into unknown regions flashes!

Andromenes

But thou, Manessa ?

Manessa

I will bide with him.

Andromenes

He hath won might ?

Manessa

He is too much of clay !

Andromenes

But in the body thou desirest him ?

[*Manessa shakes her head.*]

Andromenes

How canst thou then wed him thus willingly ?

Manessa

It must be ! Curious it is ; 'tis doomed.
A poet made us all and sways us all ;
And yet we are not slaves. But He, through us,
Ever a seeker of adventures, yearns
To gain experience of everything.

Andromenes

In season did I learn that all of us
Are but the persons set in some strange drama,
Whose author is a phantast . . . [*Looks at the fire.*]

Manessa

. . . Full of whims.—

PAUSE

Manessa

Oh, be thou blessèd ! Mayest thou live well,—
Live in the light !

Andromenes

And death itself is noble.
The embarcation makes the heart o'erbrim
With bold and anxious curiosity.

PAUSE.

But I shall come back here.

Manessa

No, no! Thou wilt
There see so much of precious things that thou
Will straight forget this corner of the world,
This weft of fire and chaff.

Andromenes

No, for I feel
I shall return. I love! I shall not linger.
No, no, I shall return to thee, Manessa.

Manessa [*in a melancholy voice*]

Thou wilt forget; or, thou wilt recollect
For one short moment only, when I knock
So softly, shyly, at the golden gate,
Wearing the poor remains of astral flesh,
A beggar, humble. Fresh from revelry
Upon thy throne, with kings surrounded, thou
Wilt glance down, see me, rise forthwith, put forth
Thy hand and say: 'My sister-soul, wife-soul,
Come sit upon the knees of my affection.'

[*Pause, both peering into the fire.*]

Andromenes

No, no, I shall come back to thee in the flesh.

[*Sempronius emerges from the shadow.*]

Sempronius

That I may kill thee yet again? Oh, hate!

Andromenes

Sempronius ?—It is curious ;—thy face
Is terrible and beautiful, with a low,
Unfathomably low, black beauty.
What power is it hath thus transfigured thee ?

Sempronius

What power ? That I will tell ! A fearful thing,—
In human speech there is no word more frightful.

Andromenes

What is this word ?

Sempronius

Envy !

[*Groans are heard from every side. Manessa covers her face with her hands.*]

Andromenes

Green-yellow viperous beast ! And yet, perhaps
Art thou the pledge of some equality
Yet undiscovered. So, thy bitter venom
I love, oh Envy, thou the democrat !

Sempronius

Yea, thou art great and good ! Yet, Holy Father,
Mightier now am I than thou art. See,
Thy gaze now falters ; now thou canst not lift
Thine eyes from mine ! Now, in thine eyes, starts terror,—
And agony—agony—Fall !

[*Andromenes falls. The fire-light goes out. Voices are heard, some groaning, others rejoicing. An uproar ensues. Will-o'-the-wisps flicker, and the stir causes a note like the tremolo of the alto of an organ.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

[*In the Monastery of the Sacred Thorns on the Isle of Trezos. Abbot Dorotheus, Hierodoulos, and the young monk Theognostos sitting by the porch of the sombre basilica.*]

Dorotheus

I have attained great age, which now bedims
My mind, and soon will numb my heart as well.
The snow already lies heaped upon my head.
'Tis winter, winter now! We seemed in summer
Nearer the sun; for while the sunshine glowed
Our thoughts sought God.—A zealot have I been,
My brethren; now tranquility—the herald
Of peaceful death—hath chilled my blood, enswathing
My mind as with a mist. My grave-ward way
I softly go, sure of my certain path.
I trail my shattered frame up to the gates
Sepulchral, and knock there with trustful hand.
A friendly porter shall ope wide those gates,
And I shall step across the threshold, and
Become a child—springtime returned, transformed,—
And with my childlike eyes shall see God's face.

Hierodoulos

By many years I am thy elder, Father,
Yet I for sixteen years in filial wise
Have been obedient to thy Master's staff.
So deign, this evening hour, that I, the pupil,
Need not conceal my doubting from my teacher.
Hear me, most reverend Father Dorotheus:
Is it then wise to trust that thou for sure
Hast found the Path and gained thy crown in Heaven?
Is this not pride? Till thou hast after death
Received the kisses of the Seraphim,
Thou darest not say thou has laid up possessions
For thine own self imperishably safe.
As our possessions perishable may
Be reived from us by ill-chance or sly thief,
So from the grey-haired pilgrim may be snatched
His unprotected burden of good fame.
The road by evil demons is infested,

Who lurk e'en at the tall sepulchral gates,
So every moment must we be on guard,
Be humble and afflict ourselves, and, trembling,
Glance every way about and cross ourselves,—
Until the sentry's password brings us home.

Theognostos [*looking out over the sea*]

The waters wore a golden flush; now gleams
The sun upon the marges of the sea,
And glistens with his diadem of beams,—
Smiling a smile of sanctity.

Hushed, ocean's golden mantle softly glides,—
Hushed, splashes on the rocks his pearly brim;
In chasuble of starry black, Night hides
Eastward beyond the circling rim.

The stillness speaks in notes of prayer; and now
The summons of the vesper bell peals out.
Unbid, me-seems, to God the billows bow,—
And that his saints are less devout.

[*The evening bell tolls.*]

Ere one tremulous note can end
Soareth it,
Till another, as a panting friend,
Followeth it.
There the first fades above the skies,
One with it;
While the bell, for each that dies,
Golden-booming re-maketh it.
Melody wafts mystery—
Sleep in it!
Sleep's own mystery—
Soothing it.
Thrones we see—
Royalty!
Our souls faint perceiving it!
This is He,
Graciously,
When we pray, receiveth it.

PAUSE

Dorotheus

Where is my crutch ? Thy hand, Theognostos !
We will now go.—Or, hold,—let me now pray
Here 'neath the sunset sky's brocaded splendour.

[*He stops and prays. The monks who are filing into the chapel also stop.*]

Dorotheus

Pour down, sweetest heart of Jesu, son of God,
Into our bodies' humble vessels peace serene ;
Scatter the tumult of our passion and our pride ;
Like a cloud of white, wash our souls clean !
Let our prayers, like wreathing incense, climb
In pure white glistening cloudlets where He trod,—
He who is God's Son . . .
Let, in truth, His earth become Thy church sublime,
Leading us by all ways up to God . . .
God our Father !

[*The bell peals.*]

[*Prasius comes up from the shore and falls at Dorotheus' feet.*]

Dorotheus

Who'rt thou, my son ?

Prasius

Prasius, mage, from Pharès.

[*A stir among the monks.*]

Dorotheus

Can it be ? A disciple thou of him,
The great Andromenes, so wise, so strange,
Who turned from Christ's true path into the forest's
Darkness ? Thou knowest well ye are forbidden
To journey here ; we each to each are strangers.

Prasius

Whilst yet the lustrous star of Archimage
Andromenes shone wondrous o'er Pharès,—
E'en then—my soul perplexed, my heart confused—

I felt that I had erred from the straight path.
But now, Father, but now have mine eyes seen
Whither those gilded steps, rich-carpeted,
Had led. In our ascent we had attained
The summit of a cliff Tarpeian, whence
With horror insensate we gazed into
A yawning precipice beneath our feet.
Look, Father, in mine eyes,—canst thou yet see
The frozen terror there? For thou alone,
May-be, hast skill to heal my poisoned soul.

Dorotheus

What, then, hath happened there?

Prasius

Oh, hear me, Father!
Lemons and roses and olives abound—
Gardens of colour in gay device—
Where a vast palace, golden crowned,
Stands in an earthly paradise.
Lovely the galleries, lofty the halls;
Mages conversed there low and long;
Gentle beasts lived within its walls,—
Statues and pictures, lays and sweet song.
E'en as the planets, in motley-hued choir,
Range round the sun and bathe in his rays,
Thus our wise brethren did he inspire,—
Master they loved him and rendered him praise.
And our mild Teacher spake to us: 'Be
Each of you, Brethren, himself, and be true;
Each of you conquer his own apogee,—
Each for himself. I love all of you.'
Roads of black magic to us he revealed,
Impious sceptres, and might born of ill.
'Himself let each be; his will let each wield.'
Fearful that saying—his voice was so still.
Tempted by wizardry, one brother brought
Power Satanic to his conquering.
Yet it was he who was craftily caught,—
Despot and slave to the Locust's dark wing.
Holy brethren, hearken!
And him he slew.

But the golden thread
Hath his steel hewn through!
O'er the gardens, like a winding-sheet, the clouds now fold;
All the fragrant flowers are withered in the leaf;
And in years all living there have agèd twice as old;—
Eyes are filled with fear, mouths stopped with grief.
Music is changed to mourning, and wisdom hath no tongue;
E'en the sages are become as lowly thralls;
All who linger, by shafts of purple death are stung;
Ghouls now walk those galleries and halls.
He, with scourge in place of sceptre, on the throne
Sits in hellish majesty bedight,—
Ceaseless wild with rancour, low his groan,—
He who slew the Son of Light.
Magi, Magi, how are ye cast down
From the cliff of pride to deepest pain!
This is your rash aspiration's crown!—
Nature's secrets yield you thus your gain!—
Father, Father, let me touch thee! Make—
Make me miraculously to forget!
From my dreadful dream let me awake,
Once again to God obedient. . . .
God is One, is bright, is calm, eternal,
Reason I renounce, and passion, too!
Out with arrogance and thoughts supernal!
Out with sport of vileness and hell's brew!—
Oh, through humble prayer to wrest me free,
And to conquer self by holy fast,—
Pass away, then, self-forgetfully,
At the Cross, Hope's anchorage, at last!

[*He kneels to Dorotheus.*]

Dorotheus

As from afar, as from a foreign shore,
I listen to this bitter story. Strange
It is for me to hear this tale of strife.
I live in blissful death, and my heart fails;
But in it yet remains one drop of balm—
A father's simple kindness. Do thy penance

Here, poor brother; shed thy tears and pray
While we are singing at the shrine. If then
Thy heart is filled with sweetness, soothed, appeased,—
Enter our fane as though it were thy home.

[*The monks go into the church in pairs, the young monk, Theognostos, alone remaining behind. He leans over the balustrade and gazes longingly over the smooth expanse of sea.*]

Theognostos

Swift to the south the darkness grows;
Azure the moon has risen to reign.
Sweet enchantment, spice-born, blows;
Stillness speaks in languid strain.
God, oh God,—why dost thou attire
Earth in vestments so marvellous?
Or dost thou, Lord, dost thou desire
Us and all men idolatrous?
Life being hell, why such array,
Lure of colour,—in hell which is earth?
Why so clearly doth all earth play
Such harmonious notes of mirth?
Hark, the psalm begins to swell!
Golden prison, I go! Farewell!
Under that sombre roof mind springs
Up to higher imaginings.
Purer than stars Thy candles shine
Where Thy house is, on Thy shrine.
World of the eyes, here God doth not dwell.
World of my sight, this is not God's house.
World that I see, a gilded hell,
Whited sepulchre, Sodom's carouse.

[*He goes into the church*]

Prasius

The monk is right, is right. . . .
World of our eyesight—there God doth not dwell;
World of our vision—a specious hell.
And the cosmic world is not God's house,
Is a false bedizened Sodom's carouse.
Weep, Prasius! How hast thou been led astray
By that vague God of him, the king of follies,

Unhappy Archimage Andromenes!
But, blessèd Dorotheus, thou hast promised
A sweet appeasement shall soon touch my heart . . .
Oh Christ, oh Christ, vouchsafe me speedy peace!
See, Christ, I sorely tribulate myself!
See, how I weep now, with hot-burning tears!—
Was I not always Thine? E'en there, among
The Magi, oft Andromenes himself
As a white brother has accounted me.
A stranger they all deemed me, oft consigned me
Hither to Trézos with their gentle gibes.—
Oh, sacred Home of holy wondrous Thorns,
For thy dear ruby wreath of precious blood
I will exchange my mage's crystal chaplet,
And give as dower all things,—all earthly things!
Wherefore I pray and sob.

[*The moon shines ever brighter. Suddenly there appears, close by Prasius, a white winged figure, vaguely silhouetted.*]

The Angel

Prasius . . .

Prasius

Who calleth me?

Angel

Prasius, Prasius . . .
To thee this hour shall God himself in glory come!
Thou, son of earth, shalt see God. Thou
Henceforth all doubts of thine must leave behind.
See, his companions light their signals now.

Prasius

Those signals?—Visitations of the fiends!

The Angel

Stay—see! Enchainèd art thou to the vision!

Prasius

Goat-hooved men—and horns, alack!—
Cat-like eyes, lust satisfied!
Hairy trunks jig demoniac,—

Red maws jeering, open wide . . .
These are the fiends!

Angel

No one knows.
Thou must see.

Prasius

Worse now! Flickering flashes twirl
From the moon, bewitched and dumb;—
Faces peer out, a hairy whirl,—
Bosoms and shoulders I see come,—
Silvery feet are dancing there,—
Mouths voluptuous grin and sneer,—
Shameless eyes accosting glare,—
Bowls held in oblation here,
Filled with bunches of sweet grapes!
Garlanded with leaf and twig
Hot hell's bratlings jig strange shapes,
Sing and beckon, beckon and jig . . .
These are the witches!

Angel

None can tell.
Wait and learn.

Prasius

On the moonlit canopy
Trip two tigers and progress.
Gambols all around I see,—
Kissing here, there a caress!
Following them, another pair!
Come there beasts in endless row?
In the light from some green flare
Now the amber moon-rays glow.
Now an opal chariot!
Who draws nigh—who—clad in cloud?
For, his face—I see it not
Through the thin and crape-like shroud.
Oh, I fear to see—I hate!
Not to view his face I crave!
I exsecrate, I exsecrate!—

Oh, our hearts, Lord God, now save
From the Evil One!

Angel

He in glory will
Reveal to thee his face!

Prasius

Chains dragging,—
Flesh burning,—
Bewitched and flagging,—
In woe and yearning,—
I kneel here low to thee,
Oh Spirit unknown to me!
Ocean shrinks to narrow streams,—
Dun and wan the world-sunbeams,—
Pulse of life a piteous wavering,—
Chants of faith confusèd quavering!
Into my soul two diamonds fall,
And it flames ecstatical.

Thy countenance! Let me but gaze my fill of thy face,—
Of thy radiant locks that have made me distraught!
Thy smile is the dawn that to Earth first was brought.
Thy countenance! Let me but gaze my fill of thy face!

No, thou shalt not depart; thou shalt open thy lips!
To me shalt thou utter some wondrous new thought;
I will listen again and again undistraught.
No, thou shalt not depart; thou shalt open thy lips!

Thou art God and, I trow it for truth, God of mine!
To thee will I sing, will I chant in my joy!
Dionysus, prevail! Hallelujah! Evoe!
Thou art God and, I trow it for truth, God of mine!

Dionysus

I dance! My dance, the dance of world-creation.
I suffer, think and love in every kind.

I am inertia and life's excitation.
Myself I seek my self, in dreams my self I find!
Sometimes I lay me down to rest, then ye
All plunge into repose; and, this begun,
Stones, worms and magi, none is but may see
That all the world is one, the world is one!

[*The vision disappears.*]

[*Prasius lies motionless. A monk comes out of the church.*]

Monk

What is it, brother?
Where is the former Mage?
He lies there! Is he faint, or sleeping?

[*He kneels by Prasius*]

He is dead . . . He is dead!

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

[*An intolerable morning on the Isle of Phares. Wind and rain. Bushes blown in wild disorder. On the right a deformed statue, dripping. Sempronius enters, wrapped in a broad yellow cape, a hood over his head.*]

Sempronius

Yes, yes! Me-likes it thus! A lightning flash?
I would that everywhere all nature could
Be drenched and quiver thus. I would gladly turn
The world into a swamp, for I am in
A swamp of mildew and corruption. Low—
Low am I fallen. That was my wish. Yes, once
I envied only Andromenes; but now,
Though all are servile to me here, I envy
Not mage alone, but all of human form,—
And birds and deer and bees I envy now,—
The flowers and the elements. These mock me,
Me who am fallen lowest; and my torment
Is my sustaining strength. Solace is mine
Only when something falls down prone before me.
Brothers I find none, save the basest born
Of Astral spirits. And I love conversing
With shaggy Rek.

[*He blows a whistle.*]

Come hither, cur! I call!
Hither, thou stinking ape-man!

[*Rek runs up to him, all damp, looking like a gorilla. He has a string of bells on his neck.*]

Shrink not! I will not beat thee. For I scourge
Those only who are above me. Thee will I
Caress. [*He fondles him.*]
Yes, thus . . . Do thou now lick my hands!
Yes, thus . . . Thou surly beast, canst thou remember
Aught of thy past? Canst thou remember, Rek?

Rek

I do remember . . .

Sempronius

What ?

Rek

I once was young . . .

Sempronius

What else ?

Rek

I was even hungrier than now.

Sempronius [*laughs*]

And what ere that ?

Rek

And I was once a child . . .

Sempronius

Aught else ?

Rek

And was often beaten hard.

Sempronius

Ere that ?

Rek

Ere that . . . nothing.

Sempronius

Gaze into my eyes,—
Recall what 'twas befell before thy childhood.
No ? I command thee to remember !

Rek

It pains me.

Sempronius

Oh, pain ! To that thou art well schooled. Remember !

Rek

It hurts me, it is hard . . .

Sempronius

Say, wert thou once
Someone—somewhere—somewhen ?

Rek

I—I have been.

Sempronius

So, tell thy tale !

Rek

[*He stands erect. His face unexpectedly changes and brightens.*]

How light-hearted am I ! How clear of mind !
My brother is by me, so handsome, so kind . . .
We are both youths, we walk and embrace,
And nature smiles on us with vernal grace.
What happiness ! What happiness !
But whom do I see ?—Oh, gentlest maid !
I fell in love,—which none may evade ;—
I remember the twilight,—dark foreshadowing.
But sweet are the fetters that cause such torturing !
What happiness ! What happiness !
No none shall evade it ! She is so beauteous . . .
But we, we are two, and love is perilous !
And he, too, gazes, and she derides.
And in the starlight my brother hides.
What misery ! What misery !
Now ye have kissed, now ye have smiled.
Why are ye hidden ? Who is beguiled ?
Oh, fearful the moment I hear dull and dim ;
' Thou art his better and higher than him.'
What misery ! What misery !
Ah, what pierces my heart and scorches me now ?
And whose wings brush yellow over my brow ?
'Tis Envy, the Crow, that clouds my brains ;
She hisses and lisps and seethes in my veins.
Oh, how degrading ! Oh, how degrading !
I raised my hand and fiercely struck him down !
Him with myself I slew at this fell blow.
I sheared the thread of life. He flies aloft,
But I . . .

[*Sempronius rises.*]

What, is this I? This am I?
Am I here?
Is this Rek I? This am I?
I have forgotten! Yes, I have forgotten . . .
Yet stay, nor be quenched,
Thou soft green glimmer!
Be thou not dimmed, oh Hope!
In the dull light
Of this green spark,
Steps leading upward . . .
Oh Hope, be not quenched!

Sempronius

A curse on thee! Thou dar'st to hope? Bring my scourge!

[*Rek howls and runs away.*]

Sempronius

More beauty in an ape's past than in mine,—
Sempronius' !—This ape hath hope; but I
Have none.—Manessa, now from thee must come
The further reckoning of my martyrdom.

[*He goes out.*]

SCENE VIII

[*Manessa's studio It has a glass roof. Big panneaux on the wall, recalling suprematist paintings, their backgrounds in strangely harmonious bright colours, in streaks and lines, startling but correlated. Manessa is wearing a smock; her arms are bare; her hair is tied with a red ribbon. She is painting.*

Sempronius enters in his damp yellow cloak. He flings it on the bench, glances at Manessa's work, shrugs his shoulders, and walks away slowly, with his head bowed.]

Manessa

Give me some sun, Sempronius,—just a little!

Sempronius

No, not a gleam! Let the rain patter on!
Thou hearest it?—ta—ta—ta? Be it always so,—
Always, until the ages cease,—ta—ta—ta—ta!

Manessa

Thy will be done.

Sempronius

I will thee weariness!

[*He laughs harshly, and goes out.*]

[*Manessa goes on working in silence. Enter Rhegius He stands still, silent, at the door, and looks sideways at her.*]

Manessa [*looking round*]

What, thou here, Rhegius? Now, no silliness!
Else thou must go.

Rhegius

Calm am I; turned to stone.
I will sit here and hold discourse on art.

Manessa

That will be well. What say'st thou of my paintings?

Rhegius

Hesper is drawing portraits like these; Persius
Designs a god,—and Lentulus strange flowers.

Commodus, violating all proportions,
Is reconstructing everything by some
New law of logic quite beyond my ken.
And thou to me art unintelligible.
Or is this but a careless parody
Of those who make designs for Persian carpets?

Manessa

There is a secret meaning in my pictures.
Music I love, and yet it seems to me
Always, to the eye, the unheard melodies
Sing sweeter than those heard.

Rhegius

Manessa, please,
If I be not too dull for thee, explain,—
Help me!

Manessa

Look, then, at this deep rosy square,
So sated,—see, it speaks so youthfully
Of morning bliss . . . yet here soon interrupted
By this fresh parable of crimson lake,—
Like a viola, is't not? Then, between them,
But coarser, harder, look upon this riot
Of love and brotherhood and play of light.
Ah, now!—and here, in a severer colour,
I will implant a broader bluish stream.
These are the youths, and this reflects ripe wisdom.
Saint Anne is this blue tone.—What are these lines?—
They, like a voiceless echo, jangle. Severed,
Strangers, they seem; they are in truth connected,
But without order. I shall add new figures
Of merry hues,—enrich my furrowed field
Of lines, in medley or in sport,—just as
My soul inspires. Truly, I know not what
I am creating, but my hand fails not
Compliantly to paint upon the canvas
Visions of radiant soul-light as they arise.

Rhegius [*dropping on his knees*]

I try to obey—obey I can no longer

Yea, thou art right, art right, thou sweet enchantress!
The silent notes are stronger than heard music.
And, sweet as is thy speech, in louder tones
Thy wondrous countenance rings out to me.

Manessa

Enough of that! Thy demon hath awakened.
Now go!

Rhegius

Oh, dost thou hate me! Wilt thou never
Suffer me once to touch thy raiment's hem?
Dost thou remember not the hymn they sang?
They are the seekers, thou the radiance,—
may
They touch the hem of beauty's raiment,
they
Are satisfied.
Only the hem, Manessa,—and thy fire
Of bliss flows through my veins a mighty torrent,
As once were all the grievous ailments healed
Of those who touched the hem of Jesus' raiment.

Manessa

I often pity thee. Nay, move not thence—
But close thine eyes for one kiss on thy brow.

[*Kisses his forehead. Sempronius enters.*]

Sempronius

Ah, splendid! This—this I had not expected!
This—is a boon! The Queen of all the Magi
Makes me a cuckold for a hunchback dwarf!
This is the first time now for many weeks
My heart exults and calmly can prepare
Revenge! I rub my hands! I rub my hands!

Manessa

I hope thou wilt not now degrade thy might
To hangman's work.

Sempronius

No, no, I swear to thee,
My beautiful Manessa, I'll not touch him,—
Not even with a finger-tip ; nor do
His body any hurt.— What, negroes, ho !

[*Two negroes enter.*]

Bind me this hunchback here between these pillars !

Manessa

What would'st thou do ?

Sempronius

I would but fondle thee !

[*The negroes bind Rhegius between the pillars.*]

Sempronius

Still might he shut his eyes,—well, let him so !
But see that both his hands are safely tied
So that he cannot cover his ears with them.—
Even so ! Begone !

[*The negroes go.*]

Oh, marvellous Manessa,
How opportune this bench is, draped in purple !
It will serve well ! 'Tis long since I last kissed thee
Upon thy honeyed lips,—long since I played
With thy soft, wave-like tresses, and permitted
My thirsting hands their feast of satin smoothness
On thy nude body. Come hither !

Manessa

Oh, take heed !
Canst thou not see deep down in Rhegius' heart
Thou rackest there against thyself a titan
Who e'en now waxeth tall, a towering flame ?
Sempronius, take heed !

Sempronius

Well, what if his envy
Do flame so that it make mine blanch a little?
Rhegius, learn Envy!—Why now hesitate,
My sweet Manessa? Thou knowest well thou must
Obey my word.

Manessa

Whilst thou art conqueror.

[*She touches the buckle of her smock, which falls to her feet, showing her graceful body through its single garment. She shakes her head, and her hair tumbles down in a thick black mass. Sempronius stretches out his arms to her with a cruel, sensual smile. She goes towards him. Rhegius utters a groan of terror. Sempronius laughs. On Manessa's lips there plays a strange smile, like that of the Gioconda of Leonardo.*]

SCENE IX

[*In other spheres. In the limitless void, two ladders, crowned with two thrones, one bright red with a crimson base, the other sky blue with an ultramarine base. The White Angel, Gudulah, on the red throne. On the blue throne, the Steel Angel, Gaburah.*

The Genius of Andromenes flying on huge golden wings between cliffs. He alights.]

The Genius of Andromenes

To Earth! To Earth!
My heart will I soon appease;
I will clasp my star of green!
I will sate me again at my ease
With my mountains and my seas . . .
Ah, into three-fold boundaries
To re-enter, renewed and serene!
To Earth! To Earth!

White Angel

Bide yet awhile, thou flitting spirit!
Whither dost aim thy golden flight?
Not oft is it that souls are willing,
Souls like thine, to fly beneath.
Wherefore cage now and imperil
Thy spirit in mask of clay anew?
Aloft there, love is all resplendent;
There—none is shall bar thy way.
There to thy touch are rose-red bosoms,—
Kiss and caress vouchsafed of God,—
For selfhood, life eternal given,—
For boundaries, the limitless.

Genius of Andromenes

Such love is not for me. I have renounced
Both Rose and Wreath. Andromenes am I,—
Andromenes, the leader of men's souls,
Servant of Hermes, sworn liege to the Earth.
Thither I go; I feel in me the power
Of solace welling for them. There they are
Unhappy,—nor understanding why they suffer,

Nor seeing the beauty that is in themselves . . .
The woodcutter returns to his poor home,
Scolds at the warping door-posts of his house,
Cursing his hovel. Oh, poor brother mine,—
He sees nought there but acrid poverty.
But I—I cannot tear mine eyes away
From this entrancing hut so great my emotion,—
Seeing the evening sun illume the windows,
Kiss them, like eyes, with distant reverence;
Hearing trees rustle, obeisant to that place
Whereon God's poor have trod and worn a path.
Thus—thus are we of earth. Suffering always,
Striving and loving. Long have I known this,
And at the Cross could not learn deeper wisdom.
The precipice
Above and below,—
Endless the rainbow I unite.
The black abyss,
The mountain glow,—
I in myself am my work and delight.
I love Earth best of all. Thou art, green Earth of mine,
The jewel on the zone of Venus the Divine!
Thine let me be! I am earth's patriot!
To Earth! To Earth!

[*He tries to fly on.*]

Steel Angel

Halt thou, halt! The threshold of triple space
I guard, stern sentry of justice. Hear me, then!
Fly,—follow thy behest,—bring consolation;
But, to transgress the law of justice—that
I will not suffer thee to meditate.
Go farward, then. Forgive in thine own justice;
Yet know, a higher court awaits them here.
The tyrant, sotted of iniquities,
With his own lips must quaff the bitter lees.
Thou hear'st? Though penance cleanseth all from sin,
Sin-stained across this threshold none may in.

White Angel

He is good.

Steel Angel

He is good;
But fullest powers he must not wield.

White Angel

Thou, within time, art right.

Steel Angel

Outside time, thou art right.

White Angel

I honour thy dread award.

Steel Angel

Thy love I adore.

Both [to Andromenes]

Fly on!

[*Andromenes, with exclamations of joy like a lark's song, flies downward. The angels smile at each other with affectionate understanding.*]

SCENE X

[*Sempronius' chamber. He is lying on his couch, supporting his head on his hand, moodily staring in front of him. An old woman stands beside him.*]

Sempronius

Pain, numbness, horror, weariness . . .

Old Woman

Summon the minstrel.

Sempronius

What ?
Babbling of minstrels ! Many are the songs
That I have heard, and they bewilder me . . .

Old Woman [*between a mumble and a tune*]

This sweet singer's healing will not fail ;
Gaolèd angels would forget their gaol ;
He sings lays of spring's swift-surging changes,
Lays of spring's sweet smells. He plays his string
Singing a soft evangel of the spring,
Whence a strain of spring-like savour ranges . . .

Sempronius

Stop mumbling ! I am weary . . . horror . . .
pain . . .

PAUSE

Summon the minstrel !

Old Woman

He stands beside thee.

[*She goes to the curtained door, where a boy appears, radiant with kindly beauty.*]

Sempronius

Nay, leave me ! How pure thou art, boy ! Get thee hence !
Weary am I, and sick of purity.

The Boy

I am not pure, my lord. A liar I,
A sinner.

Sempronius

Strange! To speak such words
With righteous voice and smile of holiness!

Boy

My righteous voice is but a borrowed habit;
A liar I.
And my bright smile is but a masquerade;
A sinner I.
For worst is he whose lie is unrevealed,
And he whose sin in splendour lurks concealed.

Sempronius

Thou? Thou concealest nought, thou righteous liar!
Yet I am pleased with thee. Why . . . Sing to me!

[*The boy sits at Sempronius' feet and sings, accompanying himself on the harp*]

Boy

Thou hast forgotten me,
Yet I remember thee.

Why wilt thou not thyself resume,
Nor slough this mantle of disguise,
So me-in-thee love might presume
In jest to pardon where I prize?

My pilgrim art thou, onward borne,—
Lame, halting, and befouled thy head;
Rent is thy side by my own thorn;
And, self-blind, dreadful is thy dread.

To me thou comest, thy lovéd one,—
Hands outstretched, though hope lack daring;
While I-in-thee will beckon thee on,
And prove with thee this long-drawn faring.

Thou hast forgotten me,
Yet I remember thee.

PAUSE

Sempronius

Sweet is the sleep thou bringest me . . .

[*The curtain is again lifted and Manessa appears. She sees the boy; she shivers, fixes her gaze on him, and retreats a step.*]

Manessa

Art thou —— ?

Sempronius

Thou knowest him ?

Manessa

He is kin to me.

Sempronius

Ah ? Kin ? How failed I to discern at once
His likeness to thee—both in looks and ways ?
So ? More alarms ?—But I want no alarms !
Sleep do I want. So strange it seems to me
That I can sleep. . . . Again—let the boy sing !

[*He lies down.*]

Boy [*sings low*]

The sister all night stood wide awake
At the window; the long night through
She had waited and waited for day to break—
The promise come true.—
But at dawn she tired and slumbered. Sleep now;
The matin-breeze lulls thee to bliss.
The brother, through glamour and dreams,—keeps his vow,—
Creeps home,—claims his kiss.

Manessa [*whispers*]

Andromenes ? Thou !

Andromenes

Hush ! Peace ! See,—my beloved assassin sleeps.

[*Sempronius and the old woman are sleeping. But Manessa and the Genius of Andromenes smile at each other with the smile of the angels who guard the threshold of space.*]

SCENE XI

[*The sun is again shining on Pharès, the flowers blooming. The bench with the marble pillars to the left.—Andromenes sitting on the steps.*]

Andromenes

Things dying, downward, living, upward strive.
The flowers, fighting, conquering gravity,
Push up, unfold their splendour and set free
Their souls—their sweet blind souls that breezes drive—
Merging in search of lovers to contrive
Immortal flowering ; in whose arms the bee
'Lights, sips, drinks deep, serving mysteriously
At once the flowers' Eternity and the hive.
Do ye strive upward, too ! The flowers' fragrance
Your soul is ; make the wisdom of the bee
Yours too ; drink deep ; while summer breezes dance
Shed forth your souls in lovers' radiance ;
Win mead for all, and in the mystery
Of service, serve—and win—Eternity.

[*Manessa comes up to him, decked out with flowers.*]

Manessa

Hail, Genius Andromenes ! Must I wait
For death to come, or with thy shining body
Wilt thou now clasp this seared and tattered raiment
Wherein my wingéd spirit is enmeshed ?

Andromenes

The flesh I donned in flight miraculous.
Thine will soon be transfigured. Glad were I
To be a man immortal, seeing thee
Immortal too. Here, scarce may we do right
In mystic twofold righteousness. We both,
In the world-memory living, shall live on
Accountably ; there, thou shalt smile for ever
On me, and I shall be insatiable.

Manessa

Thy golden fullness, gentle Genius,
Will cleave my soul, which strains against its flesh
O'erburthened. I am shamed to stand unmoved
Before thee. Yet, some day when I shall stand,
Spectator of the invisible, perchance
I shall be more ashamed—then, when I first
Essay to circle in the dance of freedom . . .
Yet this my soul demands, and thou wilt grant.

Andromenes

Manessa, dance! I will make thee
A snake by magic minstrelsy.
Thou hast o'ercome the flesh's weight;
Be the idea, the Determinate;
With a bird's lightness, a snake's elegance,
Be, like me, a spirit, a genius,—dance!

[*Manessa dances slowly, strangely ethereal.*]

Andromenes [*sings*]

In the primal Dark, inert lies the Clay.
Down to the depths, with Light, flies Form;
The abyss then brightens in the fitful ray;—
A confused pullulation sets creation a-swarm.
In chaos and mist and indolence
The holy impulse will commence.

Of themselves the Forms, at heat, beget Weight,—
And beauty then gleams in the heavens sublime;
And dances melodic arise to elate
The heart which in rhythm begins to beat time.
In rugged, risible turbulence
Young impulse gallops thence.

It meets the Idea, and perfection matures;
Then like mirth of gods is the Life-song here.—
Thy motion of arms and of head assures
That one, erstwhile fettered, hath free career.
Magical is the dancer's sense
Of the Holy Impulse in eminence.

[*During the singing of the last couplet, Rek, crouching behind a bush, is watching the two of them keenly. Manessa stops.*]

Manessa

Thou see'st,—now I am tired.

Andromenes

Yet soon will I
Remake thee such that never shalt thou weary.
For this time, now, take respite in a kiss.

[*Manessa sits beside him. They kiss each other. The white dove of Andromenes circles over him and alights on his shoulder.*]

Rek [*aside*]

They kiss each other—vaguely I recall it.
They kiss each other—this will turn to woe.
I must run to the master,—rouse him, rouse him. . . .

[*He runs off.*]

Manessa

Thou hast returned ; 'tis even as thou didst say.

Andromenes

Perhaps 'twas only for thy sake I came . . .
But the Steel Angel makes his scales to clang.—
Now dance again,—or, if not, smile on me.

Manessa

With thee, I too am growing young again.

Andromenes

Soon younger shalt thou be than birth itself.

Manessa

Ah, then, not wise but foolish would I be,
As a butterfly.

Andromenes

Is not a butterfly
A sage who, in bewilderment, from Wisdom
Rises to Mind—to earth's best life ? For men
Too scant of Mind oft lose all Wisdom too,
And but by mightiest toil of Mind can win
Their Wisdom immemorial back to them.—

Thou seest, I still have Mind. But much more wise
Than I am is each babbling rivulet,
And wiser than my words—my kiss.

Manessa

May that
Be kept for ever so!

Andromenes

Pan keeps all things.
"Lose thou not aught," once he was told; to which
He answered: "There's no where it can be lost.
Gladly would I give to my silent neighbour,—
Fling to the void.—My neighbour is myself,—
And full of me the void."

Manessa

And this—are we?

Andromenes

We are.

Manessa

Ah, then, what bliss!

Andromenes

Speak not of bliss; it is a shallow word.

[*Manessa hears something.*]

Andromenes

Some evil man approaches stealthily.

Manessa

Drive him swift hence!

Andromenes

Hast thou ne'er heard that God
And Devil are kin, that high and low are one?

Manessa

Wilt thou not drive him hence?

Andromenes

True victory
I will strive after. Didst thou say, Manessa,
That life to thee were bliss? No, that were shallow!
For am I happy here? How should I be
When I am suffering, ill, flesh mortified?
Can I have bliss and my heart leprosied?
I love Sempronius with the love of men
For their soul's body. While he bides in gloom
The sun in my own skies is draped in mist;
While he is racked, my brow is pricked with thorns;
While he is vicious, dumb is all my virtue;
A wailing at my feast affrights my guests,
And o'er my banquet a wan wraith presides.
And thou, my jewel, if e'er I thought that thou
Couldst heal my dear assassin-brother, we
Should part upon a jest—aye, we should part—
And I would give thee to him.

Rek [*aside to Sempronius*]

Yes, I saw
Them kissing here.

Sempronius [*aside*]

A demon he may be;
But this my spear is charmed to pierce the flesh
Of demons and to maim a devil's heart.

Manessa

But he will not repent.

Andromenes

No road, Manessa,
Is endless; all the waters reach the ocean.

Manessa

But his are stagnant,—like a slough accurst.

Andromenes

Canst thou then hate him?

Manessa

Yes.

Andromenes

Canst thou hate me ?

Manessa

What, thee ?

Andromenes

Then thou canst not hate him. Would he
Peer deeper into me . . .

Sempronius [*emerging from behind the bush*]

Thus will I peer,
And with keen gaze. I recognise thee now !

[*Andromenes advances a few paces to meet Sempronius, his arms spread out wide as for an embrace.*]

Andromenes [*rising*]

Thou knowest me ?

Sempronius

Yes, Andromenes !

Andromenes

Know me,—oh, know me !

Sempronius

Once more I slay thee, and once more I curse thee !

Andromenes

Look in my eyes ; behold, I love thee so !

Sempronius

Stand thus ! My aim is broader.
Thou art good ; I evil. Die !
My pride is prouder thus to fall yet lower !
Bear thou, my spear, an anguish to him !
Bear him Death, kin to me !

[*He brandishes and hurls the spear. Darkness.*]

SCENE XII

[*Rek's den. Sempronius lying down by the dying wood fire. Rek sits beside him and re-kindles the fire with a bough.*]

Sempronius

Ah, here at last, at last! Whither should I
Else go? I might destroy the Magi all
Upon Pharès? What then? I have the might;
But what contrive thereby? Burn up the world?
Crass am I growing. Rek, I grow like thee.

Rek

I hear steps.

Sempronius

Steps?
Who, then? On the isle are none
Save us two now. Who walks abroad.

Rek

Steps . . . Steps . . .
Thou hearest them?

Sempronius

Truly, this is most strange!
A footfall, and so loud . . . so clamorous . . .

[*He sits down.*]

Who might this be?

Rek

Art thou afraid?

Sempronius

What, I?
Afraid?

Rek

Look! There, aloft!

Sempronius

My sight is dim.

Rek

One comes! He is terrible! His eyes ablaze!

Sempronius

Halt! What? Yes, 'tis Rhegius!

[*He laughs.*]

So this hunchback,
This fool yet lives! Perhaps he would outrival
Sempronius and Andromenes?

Rhegius

I come
To chastise thee!

Sempronius [*laughs*]

Wait but until I arm
My glance with venom of ill-will, then straight
Thou fallest to dust.—How? How? Thou art not fallen?—
Then now I put my arm forth,—into thy heart
I speed an astral ray to make thy blood
Rush in a fountain from thy mouth!—How now?
What insults now? An astral dart? He jeers
And laughs?

Rhegius

I laugh! For though thou mayest have
Known Envy, and out of Envy didst devise
Banners of yellow for the mystic hosts,
Yet have I now, re-birth of all my passion,
An energy of envy once thine own.
Remember, thou wast my abettor. I
Have raised thy banner. Mightier am I
Than thou art—even thou—'mong the black spirits,—
More mighty now, for I have suffered more!

Sempronius

Art thou more evil, too?

Rhegius

Dare not, thou cur,
Therein seek solace ! No, I am not evil !
For this alone, fulfilling the prediction,
Have I breathed forth foul flame, in this one striving
To outstrive thee. Strain all thy power—yet I
Will give my life, need were,—nay, I'll surrender
My immortality through all the ages,
Only to crush thee dead !

Rek

Ough ! Ough !
Two champions at bay !
I am lost, I am lost !
But am I lost ?
Perhaps salvation
Is near at hand.
Oh, horrible !

Sempronius

All who are with me,
By the lilac pentagram,
I imprecate to vanquish
My adversary !—
Have I been cheated ?
I exacted victory !—
All my strength I throw
Into this dread effort.
Let the Astral Ocean tremble !
Let it be strength to strength !

Rek

Oh, horrible, horrible !

[*The Magi gaze fixedly on each other, their bodies betraying a frightful exertion. They make strange movements with their hands.*]

Rhegius

No, thou shalt perish !

Sempronius

Mine the victory !

Rhegius

Then, let both perish!

Sempronius

Nay, let all perish!

[*A terrific thunder-clap. The den falls in. Chaos, dust and smoke.*]

SCENE XIII

[*A misty mountain at early dawn. All sorts of people on the sloping paths, footways, and steps, climbing to various heights. The mountain smokes, like a thurible. All the voices are heard as one chorus.*]

Choir of Those Ascending the Mountain

Time and Life we sing and praise ;
Victor's seal on them we set ;
Home we wend our several ways,—
Water-vessel, water-jet
Praise God and eternity—
Homeward bound let us exult.
Sweeter that our bliss may be,
Make our paths more difficult.

[*Abbot Dorotheus enters slowly, leading his disciples.*]

Dorotheus

Pour down sweetest heart of Jesu, son of God,
Into our bodies' humble vessels peace serene.
Scatter the tumult of our passion and our pride ;
Like a cloud of white wash our souls clean.
Let our prayers, like wreathing incense, climb
In pure white glistening cloudlets where He trod,
He who is God's son . . .
Let, in truth, the earth become Thy church sublime,
Leading us by all ways up to God . . .
God our Father !

[*Prasius comes up and rapidly outstrips the monks his white robe floating out behind him as in a whirlwind. He is striving after the summit.*]

Prasius

Thou art God and, I trow it for truth, God of mine !
To thee will I sing, will I chant in my joy !
Dionysus, prevail ! Hallelujah ! Evoe !
Thou art God and, I trow it for truth, God of mine !

[*Amilus majestically advances up the ladder, halts, and looks down on the earth.*]

Amilius

Let my soul serve the beauty of the universe!

[*Sempronius, all in black, stands on the very lowest step*]

Sempronius

Why have ye never with your love washed my soul
pure?
Blackest of blurs a strong love purifies.
Why have ye toyed with me, and spoiled me? This
for sure,
To harden me, so that ye might chastise.

[*Manessa and Rhegius lightly and happily pass him by, and begin ascending the mountain rapidly, Manessa anxiously supporting Rhegius*]

Manessa

Henceforth I shall be thine; didst thou not know?

Rhegius

Art thou not joined then with Andromenes?

Manessa

I am with him; with all am I. But most
Of all am thine, who most hast need of me.
March on! I will support thee—thee, my friend.
Thou art yet weak, but I—I am all thine,
Bought by thee at the price of all thy love.
For every torment suffered I give joy.

(*Rek scrambles up through the rocks and thorny bushes*)

Rek

I can hope! I can hope! The Steel Angel speaks,—
He has told me my spots are washed nearly clean,—
And that up above the sharp mountain peaks
Burns unforgotten the fire of green.

Sempronius

Thus all exult.—No pardon! Accurst, indeed!

[*Andromenes, winged and radiant, runs down from aloft, with a motion of flight*]

Andromenes

To you, my brothers, you my kin, I speed!
Andromenes am I, come to your aid,
So that your suffering be less delayed
In the consuming fire. These I pass by,
Thither, down to the nethermost I fly,
Where of both heights and depths is greater need.

[*He stops beside Sempronius.*]

Sempronius

Avaunt, bright foe!

Andromenes

Oh, gaze, gaze on my eyes!
Thou art myself, my twin. And, when God rests,
Thy light is mine, and mine is thy distress.
Dost thou not recognise?

Sempronius [*staggering*]

I know now! This am I! This truly!

Andromenes

Yes!

[*They embrace each other.*]

Dionysus

In this age-long moment, it is granted men may see
That all the world is One, is Unity.

[*Once again all the voices merge in chorus.*]

Choir of Those Ascending the Mountain

We who climb in suffering,
All unlike in mind and face,
Yearn to merge them in thy being,
As rivulets to one sea race.

Dionysus

Those who must go down—they know
Motion a better thing than God;
Like fast rain, they drop and flow;
Cycle eternal is my road.

Choir

Merging time in timelessness,
Art thou always thine own peer?
Always doth life's stream progress,
Always one same destiny steer?

Dionysus

Old to new, this will I tell,—
A simple truth for faith to know:
I am eternal, immeasurable,
Yet withal I ever grow.

Choir

Growth unaging, motion endless,—
Sun-white pole and night-wrapped pole,—
Pillars built of powers deathless,—
God World-poet and World-scroll.

THE END

Vasilisa the Wise

A DRAMATIC FAIRY TALE

Vasilisa the Wise

CHARACTERS

Vasilísa the Wise.

Mámelfa, her nurse.

Kírbit, her father.

Merodákh, a god.

Fúnduk, a king.

Churílo,
Seredín, } his sons.
Iván,

Kíkhrom, a noble.

Polosátik,
Zliúka, } jesters.

Yálya-m, a foreign queen.

Ngi, an interpreter.

Three Magi.

Svetozár,
Yálya-da, } the children.
Mítra,

Herald and other attendants at the court of Tsar Fúnduk. Maidens in attendance on Vasilísa. Boy-maidens, warriors, and other attendants at the court of Yálya-m. Persons in the visions.

SCENES

Scene 1. *The Castle of Merodákh.*
,, 2. *The same.*
,, 3. *The Court of Tsar Fúnduk.*
,, 4. *The Throne Room.*
,, 5. *The Palace Garden.*
,, 6. *On the Steps of the Palace.*
,, 7. *Nursery in the Palace.*
,, 8. *In the Desert.*
,, 9. *The Court of Yálya-m.*
,, 10. *A Room in Vasilísa's Palace.*
,, 11. *The Court of Yálya-m.*
,, 12. *In the Desert.*
,, 13. *The Palace Garden.*
,, 14. *On the Steps of the Palace*

It will perhaps be useful to give some hints to the reader regarding pronunciation. Every Russian name and word has been accented, and it will render the reading much easier and more harmonious if readers will attend to the accentuation. The vowels are to be sounded as in Italian: *y* as a vowel, something like *i* in the word *swim*. *G* is always hard; *ch* as in *church*, *zh* as the *s* in *leisure*; *kh* as German or Scotch *ch*; *s* never as *z*, but always hard as in *sat*, *sit*; *z* always soft as in *zone*, *zero*. In the scenes in Moonland, the language has been faithfully transliterated, and the text is thus rendered at the author's express desire. Here, again, the vowels are to be sounded as in Italian; *Ng* as *ng* in *strong*; and the accentuation should be followed when indicated; otherwise, the accent is even.

Vasilisa the Wise

A DRAMATIC FAIRY TALE

SCENE I

[*A veranda in the castle of Merodákh-Rámmon. A garden visible below. Beyond a fence, sands and hills, the sea and the sky. Merodákh-Rámmon sitting on the balcony between two lofty white columns, surmounted withcarved bulls' heads. He has a curly beard and is resting his head on his hands, staring in front of him. Kírbit enters from behind, and for a moment stands silent. Kírbit is grey. Merodákh looks round slowly*].

Merodákh

Thou'rt here? I had already summoned thee.
We must now venture!

Kírbit

All seems here transformed!

Merodákh

Aye, here I am God. But I too have changed.
I had been ever busy ceaselessly
Enlarging my experience, increasing
My reason's range, till one clear day I heard
A whisper in my heart: "But what of Love?"
And straightway, in a rosy wreath of vapours,
My brother Gods swirled round me, and my spirit
Was gently held in sweetest lassitude,
And dreams unveiled themselves, like flowers in rain;
And rays of starlight rang in melody. . . . .
A passion and a splendour! Expectation!
Then, in my paradise of visions all
Uncontemplated, then at last I met
The queen and sovereign of my changèd soul,—
That queen thy daughter, King of the realm of ice,
Wise brother mine.

Kírbit

Aye, aye. . . .

Merodákh

Yea,—heretofore, I took no petty portion
Of the whole universe, wherein to see
My soul as in a mirror. And faithfully
Did all things mirror me! My intellect
Resolved all, all lay open, all lay bared,
But all too clear and plain, known, void and empty!
I have too long beheld, revealed to view,
The molecules' wild revelry of dance,
Which jig in figures whose repeating series
Only cold thought could trace. But now, but now—
Look, friend, upon that Ocean! Seest thou how
With new life I have plenished it? For I
Was weary and unpleased with darting dolphins,
With big-mouthed sharks that swam the ocean depths,
And agile wonderful cephalopods.
So now thou wilt see playful sirens there,
Who flash their tails and gleam like diamonds,
And wave their silvery arms enticingly,
Tresses wild-blown, drenched in the salty sea.
For them my passion has conceived yon Proteus,—
Fat-bellied dolt, web-footed Proteus,—thus
For ever trying on his scampish tricks,
For ever fooled. Behold him how he snarls,
And twists and rolls his eyes at their mocking laughter;
And hear him quack in fury and groan; and then
He'll burst, and all the sea will be a motley
Of creaming foam! Or look upon those hills,
Those birds, all sorts, with human heads, some crowned,
Some plumed with diadems of golden flowers,
Some silent, some that coo or sing or speak.
Listen to them; they grieve and call for help.
There, too, in a garden, round an apple-tree
A red-scaled snake coils; out of his gaping maw
The quivering tongue slides diamond-shaped; his eyes
Mesmeric stare.
Some flowers are there, blue, with peals of bells
Chiming like distant gongs, and some send forth
A fragrance visible.
Along that little path there, suddenly,
The earth will thrill where Vasilísa's feet

Shall in due season deign to tread the sod. . . .
And what is in my castle ? It is full
Of butterflies and of coy stillnesses,
Of shadows, raptures, murmurs of low prayers.
There Demon Passion seals his ruby lips
With his own finger to restrain himself.
Now, Kírbit, grey old sage, look well on me,
Me, Merodákh, on Merodákh-Rámmon,
Me, the magician of Chaldaean spells,—
'Tis I that love the godlike Vasilísa !

Kírbit

Yea, yea. . . .

Merodákh

What say'st thou of it ? Ope thine eyes
Upon the misty future ! Tell me this, how much
Of happiness bodes there for me ?

Kírbit

No need
To look so far.

Merodákh

But thou, art thou not glad
That Merodákh is wooing Kírbit's daughter ?

Kírbit

On earth are many maids, but there are none
Like Vasilísa. Of the men on earth,
Wisest of all, most powerful and best,
Purest of all, is Merodákh the Prince.

Merodákh

Let us give praise to Fate !

Kírbit

Aye, render praise ;
For to give praise to Fate is never vain.
And at this very moment, she herself
Is choosing at her mirror, for herself.

Merodákh

Then let us hasten thither.

Kírbit

Nay, no need.
Hasten there but in thought, and look on her,—
I see her now.

Merodákh

Lend me thine eyes! I, too,
Can see them.

[*Vasilísa's upper room comes into view.*

SCENE II

[*Merodákh and Kírbit on the veranda, as in last scene. The back of the stage represents Vasilísa's broad carved upper room. Vasilísa herself is sitting in the middle of the room, in front of a large mirror, with two candles burning, though it is daylight. On carpeted benches along the walls, maidens are sitting in bright dresses. The nurse Mámelfa in the corner.*]

The Maidens' Chorus

The white world has no boundary.
Little mirror, let me see!
Nought is far and nought is nigh.
Little mirror, teach the eye!
Youth to youth, and peer to peer,—
Comeliness is beauty's right.
Who shall be our master here,
Bright little moon to give us light?

Vasilísa

Sing on, sing on! I see something.

Mámelfa

Better I should utter a spell.

Show! Show!
Search high and low!
On the wondrous champion
Shall our wind-borne breath not blow?
On our little mirror here
Cause his image to appear!
Bright as sunshine bid it glow!

Vasilísa

I see . . .

Mámelfa

My little lady, let me have a look! What a fine man! Oh, his eyes! They frighten me—his curly beard—the strength of his lips—the manhood in his temples! As a lion among animals, is he among men! He is splendid, my Vasilísa! I can be glad that such an eagle will live with thee as thy very own.

Vasilísa

Splendid, but I want to choose, I want to choose!

Mámelfa

The best of men to the best of maids!

Vasilísa

That is not my will.

Mámelfa

If thou will it not, there is an end of it. Who dare stand against thy desire? Thou art wisest of all.

Vasilísa

Sing on, maidens, that the glass show, not the best of men, but another.

The Maidens' Chorus

Hearts will choose, hearts will be free;
Mirror, gleam again for me!
Better, worse,—words void and vain;
Heart's own love alone shall reign.
Mirror, set them side by side;
Heart's own choice is greatest bliss.
He shall win her as his bride,
And her red lips he shall kiss.

Vasilísa

The vision is forming; sing on, sing on!

Mámelfa

Better I should utter a spell.

Swift the fierce wild beast can race ;
Set thou forth upon the chase !
Fly, white hawk, resplendently !
Some new face let us now see ;
Other men there are of might ;
Let gleam below another light.

Vasilísa

He is really beautiful ; so valorous !

Mámelfa

I know him ; that is Eruslán the Knight. Thou needst not look further. He is our own Knight, a good Russian. And how he will love ! Yes, he will forget his prowess, let his steed grow fat in the stable, to sit beside Vasilísa.

Vasilísa

What ? I am to choose him ?

Mámelfa

Yes, my little lady, choose him !

Vasilísa

My mirror, show me yet another. Be not long in searching ; show me now the one who is nearest and dearest. Oh, Mother,—look !

Mámelfa

But this man is quite different from the others. He is—oh, too much himself !

Vasilísa

It is he I want.

Mámelfa

But why, Vasilísushka, why, my little lady ?

Vasilísa

Mother, their part is accomplished, his has not begun.
With a fine array of many hued silks on a cloth all white, marvellous a pattern appeareth in my sight.
I will deck out his soul with his own thoughts and desire ;
I will re-gild his heart with his own hot fire.

Comrade mine, dear one, thou canst not sound how many treasures within thee abound. Dear mirror mine, I thank thee anew—thou hast shown me the unknown, thou hast shown me the unready! Sweet it is to be thinking of him sitting beneath that tree, with his eyes drooped, and wotting not that Vasilísa is gazing at him, that Vasilísa loves him, that she will soon summon him, will soon fondle him, curtsey to him humbly and call him her lord,—that she will soon gather herself up together and bestow herself on him as a gift unstinted! Oh, Ivánushka, my love and darling, be of all men the happiest! Grieve not, Iván, my love; let my voice reach out unto thee! Gaze, gaze upon the ground! Behold! It is not grass in front of thee, but a green abyss. Gaze on, gaze on; 'tis myself thou seest, my blue eyes and my dark brows, my golden locks, my red lips, my mouth, my spirit in the heights and in the depths. Canst thou not hear my heart, how hotly it beats? Knowest thou that destiny is reckoning every one of those beats? Gaze deeper into the green abyss! Little heads of children are beckoning to thee. Those, Iván, are our son and our daughter!—My Iván accepts them; he has smiled.

[*Vasilísa's upper room disappears.*]

Kírbit

Yea, yea.

Merodákh

No, I will not lift a finger,
Nor struggle, whatsoe'er portend. So be it!
But—for long time to come, let all things shroud
Themselves in cerements of night, and I
Will sleep. For I no longer wish to live.

Kírbit

Thou'rt mighty.

Merodákh

Hence I suffer mightily.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

[*The dining room in Tsar Fúnauk's palace. Dinner is just over. The servants are clearing up. Zliúka and Polosátik by a long table. Zliúka is sullenly counting up the leavings, gathering them up into a bag. Polosátik is looking at him and laughing. Zliúka is a dwarf, old and hunchbacked. Polosátik is younger and more good humoured, also very small, but merry.*]

Polosátik

What is your hoard for ?

Zliúka

Sh—— ! For a rainy day. . . . But don't tell anyone !

Polosátik

I should eat them up.

Zliúka

Hush ! You might. . . . But don't disturb my count.

Polosátik

Do you even count the crumbs ?

Zliúka [*muttering*]

Eleven—twelve—thirteen.

Polosátik [*laughing aloud*]

What's the use of your sweeping them so carefully into a corner ? His Highness the Prince will look after you all right.

Zliúka

Stop talking ! You are a fool, and I am sensible. You were born to be a dwarf, with a very scanted supply of wits, but I was born to be a great man. My mother, be she accursèd, dropped me one day and broke my spine ; but I have a big head, out of proportion. I was meant to be big, but I have a bent backbone. I am become a dwarf and a fool ; I might have been a merchant—or even a sacristan. But any proper man has an instinct for the accumulation of property. To have no property is to have no body. That's why I am a collector. I sleep with my poor treasure by me ; and feel all the time, " I have something of my very own."

Polosátik

Oh, what a sage you are, Zlúka, you son of a dromedary! I never accumulate things, I like to think of giving up even other people's treasures! Yes, to give it all up! 'Mine' and 'Thine' indeed! I have played at mud-pies and laughed at it all; for Kings do the same with the kingdoms they call their own—just the same kind of dirt! But to give it all up, to escape into the woods, the fields, where there is not a human being near you, only birds and beasts, there to heave a sigh of relief, to look out on the horizon of the white world—to feel it is all, unfenced, unpreserved, all mine! The bright moon in the heavens, and his image on the lake, thee silent trees; the song of the goldhammer, sweetness at heart, and a hallowed calm over the whole of the sky,—to embrace the whole world—so—with my little dwarfish hands, and call it mine! Then I who am so little, so very small, just as well as the biggest giant on earth, I can bestow myself on the world, and say, 'Accept this of me'

A Servant [*sweeping*]

You dirty fellow, what a mess! Shoo, you ragamuffin! Get out from under the table there, you bandy-legged fool, you silly idiots, both of you!

[*Polosatik runs away and sits on his heels and smiles Zlúka is angrily pushing his possessions into his bag, when the servant scatters them with a broom*]

Servant

Shoo! Off you go, you vagabond; trying to sneak the crumbs away, are you? I'll sweep 'em up! That's for the dogs

Zlúka [*hurriedly picking them up*]

Let me have them, let me have them! Don't give yourself the trouble.

Servant

Get out! [*Hits him with the broom.*]

Zliúka [yells and rubs the sore spot]

I won't give them up! Don't touch them! They're mine!

[*Enter Kíkhrom, a boydr from the steppes: he sits on a couch and breathes heavily.*]

Kíkhrom

Mf——get me some brandy!

Servant

Yes, my Lord and Sire. [*Leaves the room.*]

Kíkhrom

What are you after, Zliúka, under the table there?

Zliúka

Gathering up the crumbs, gracious Lord. My patrons allowed me the crumbs, and I danced with joy; I barked like a dog, and crowed like a cock; I have earned them, my most gracious lord!

Kíkhrom

He-he-he! I see Tsar Fúnduk is an open-handed man. He keeps you all in the lap of luxury. What a host of henchmen he feeds! He is very kind. So, you have a good time, do you? Tell me, do you pray, night and morning, for the Tsar?

Zliúka

We do very comfortably, very comfortably.

Kíkhrom

And you, Polosátik?

Polosátik

We are so contented, my lord, that if I were to be asked, 'Polosátik, would you like to change places with Kíkhrom?' I should say, 'No!'

Kíkhrom

He-he-he! [*Suddenly becomes serious.*] What a stupid thing to say! That's an impertinence! Go and fetch me that stick there!

Zlúka

That's right! That's the way!

Polosátik

What are you going to beat me for?

Kíkhrom

If only to teach you what differences are! And I must have some exercise after dinner I will thrash you, then you will tell me whether you would like to change places with me!

Polosátik

But, if you please, sir, if you really want to become a Polosátik, I will oblige you, and dispense with the beating

Kíkhrom

What a swelled head you have! You're too smart! You must be thrashed, then we'll see which side of your face you're laughing on!

Zlúka

Don't pardon him! Give him a lesson!

Kíkhrom

Bring me that stick!

[*Enter Ivan Tsarévich*]

Iván

Kíkhrom going to beat somebody? He shall do nothing of the sort Look at me, Kíkhrom Fungásych If you touch one hair of Polosatík's head, I'll comb your beard for you!

Kíkhrom

A bad fellow, a bad fellow, the Tsar's third son! He's never got anywhere! Bring me that stick! I'll flay you alive I must have some distraction

[*A Herald runs in, out of breath*]

The Herald

Oyez, oyez, oyez! Tsar, Tsarévichi, generals, peers, peeresses, servitors, courtiers, chamberlains, butlers,

treasurers, grooms, cooks, scullery-maids of the antechamber, serfs of the courtyard! Oyez, oyez, oyez! Make ready! Great events are coming about. The Magician Kírbit is coming here in a golden chariot, drawn by eight horses, and with him in her own person, Vasilísa, the Royal maiden, on whom the sun never sets but stands still in wonderment. . . . Mph—I must draw breath!

[*The room fills with Nobles of the Court. Prince Churílo and Prince Seredín also enter.*]

The Herald

The Magician Kírbit is approaching; he is coming not idly, but of set purpose. A thing unheard of, unseen,—a father bringing his daughter for betrothal. Never has Tsar been thus honoured, never has a proper bridegroom been offered such a prize! Vasilísa is asking to marry our Prince!

Kíkhrom

Which one?

Churílo

St, you fool—though you are a noble! Which one, indeed? Look at us and then say!

Kíkhrom

Of course! Who could the bridegroom be but Churílo Fúndukovich?

Churílo

Of course! Yes, but I must hurry up and dress! I have such a big looking glass now, I can see myself from tip to toe! Come along Pán'ka, Gán'ka, Strízhka, Polubrátik! Come and help me to dress!

[*He goes out with his pomaded suite. Tsar Fúnduk enters, in his dressing gown.*]

Fúnduk

What is the matter here?

The Herald

Tsar-bátiushka, make ready! Great events are coming about! The Magician Kírbit is approaching; he is coming in a gold chariot drawn by eight horses. . . .

Fúnduk

Yes, yes?

The Herald

And with him Vasilísa in her own person, the royal maiden on whom the sun never sets but stands still in the heavens in wonderment. . . .

Fúnduk

Yes, enough of that! Come to the point! What does he want here?

The Herald

A husband for his daughter.

Fúnduk

This is serious business! And I am only in my dressing gown! I must, at least, get my crown on! And tell them to light the stove in my throne-room; it's always chilly there.

Kíkhrom

Why, your Majesty, it's summertime now!

Fúnduk

Light the stove! I haven't been in there since the winter. Besides, it shows kindness and consideration. Kírbit is coming and is bringing his daughter! How the neighbouring Tsars will envy me! But, the wedding will have to be at his expense; my exchequer won't run to such an outlay! Hey, there! Bring me my crown, at once!

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

[*The Throne Room in Tsar Fúnduk's Palace. Fúnduk on the throne with his crown on. The Court around him. At his feet a dog, Polosátik, an ape, and Zlúka. In front of the throne, Churílo, bedizened; beside him, Seredín, also in new clothes.*]

Churílo

Isn't this fine! Look at this hat,—isn't it tall? It's so tall, that it couldn't pass under the door; so I had to give it to my halberdier to carry in front of me, like a holy thing! And my boots—they have gilded and pointed toes; no one else could walk on such fine toes; anyone else would stumble and sprain himself; but I could do a knee-dance in them! Have you seen my brocaded belt? Sable! And foreign velvet! And then this! Just smell my head! That's something if you like! Distilled roses from Arabia, made and sent by the Queen Sheherazáda. And look how my barber Futyr has pointed my beard to a finger-point,—quite ravishing! I looked into the glass, and was amazed. I thank my papa and mamma, that they bore me to their glory. And I—well, I know enough to put a rich harness on a fine horse! Indeed, I have my doubts whether Vasilísa Kírbitevna is quite the mate for me.

Polosátik

Prince Seredín, step forward as well. Possibly Vasilísa the Wise is coming after you. [*Laughter, jeers.*]

Seredín

Well? We have little to say in the matter. Either she has made her choice, or she has not. We shall go on just the same. There are plenty of other girls in the world.

Fúnduk

Seredín's a most, most sensible fellow. Churílo's a fop, but Seredín's a man of sense.

Kíkhrom

And Prince Iván has a spotty face and walks with a limp, and as for his brains—he hasn't any! He's a degenerate.

Fúnduk

He had a different mother. They all had. Churílo's mother was a French princess, very slender in body, and witty in mind, finicky and most difficult to get on with.

Kíkhrom

She died—did she not ?

Fúnduk

No, but she eloped, thank the gods ! A detestable hussy ! She had a secretary, and I wished him further. . . . Well, let's say no more about it. State secrets, he-he-he ! And Seredín's mother was a German. She gave me splendid dinners ! So cheap and satisfying ! She, really, did die. She loved eating. On her death-bed she called me to her, went through all her books and accounts, one by one, and then said, ' There you are, Fúnduk Volotóvich, it's all straight,' and then she died.

Zliúka

That's a queen, if you like !

Fúnduk

As for Iván ! I was getting on in years, and this very Kírbit, as a kindness, sent me a young Tátar woman—just to keep me warm. Oh, what a shy young girl she was ! She bore me Iván, and died in childbirth. She was silent, all her life, and in death.

Kíkhrom

Stop ! They have arrived ! Beat the drums ! Sound the trumpets ! Cry, ' Hail, noble visitors ! '

[*Drums, trumpets and shouts. Kírbit enters, in a fantastic costume, as a Mongol Prince ; and Vasilísa, veiled.*]

Fúnduk

Welcome Kírbit Yatmánovich ! Thou hast caused us great joy in deigning to come. Hail !

Kírbit

Tsar, I have a wise daughter, wiser than her father, the maiden Vasilísa ; whate'er she wish, she does, and I help. She has decided to marry thy son, and so it shall be. I hope that thou will consent, brother Fúnduk.

Fúnduk

Wherefore should I not consent? Dowries are given not for bridegrooms, but with brides. Only—my exchequer is a bit shaky, and a wedding would mean a feast for everyone. . . .

Kírbit

Of that no more! The fame of the wedding shall spread over all lands. The casks of wine in Kírbit's cellar have already been broached. We will pay for it all! Drink, and be merry, honourable people, at the wedding of Vasilísa!

Fúnduk

Let me kiss thy hand, Kírbit Yatmánovich! [*He descends from the throne and they kiss.*] Behold my boy, Churílo, Tsarévich of Dark-Russia!

Vasilísa

That is not he.

Churílo.

Not he? Vasilísa! [*Struts round her like a peacock.*] Come and kiss me, my betrothed! I am Churílo Fúndukovich, I am he! Blush not! Be not abashed! Do not thrust thy sleeve forward to hide thyself! Do not droop thine eyes! I see thou art indeed my proper mate, my equal.

Vasilísa

Thou art not the man. . . . It was not he that I saw, not he I chose. I have nothing to hide; I do not droop my eyes. But I am not thy mate, nor thine equal. Thine, indeed? Why, Churílo, thou art a fop, and a coxcomb!

Churílo

Oh Vasilísa, be not ashamed! Oh Vasilísa, be not coy! I will love thee, I swear it! Why wilt thou not acknowledge that it was my image, my eyes, that ensnared thy heart? A Venetian painter painted my portrait. I had one hundred copies reproduced. All the princesses

asked for copies; and they sigh, when they look upon the picture, and press the gilded frame to their white breasts.

Vasilísa

This is not the man, I repeat. Has not Churílo any brothers?

Seredín

[*Flushing all over.*] Yes, he has; I am . . .

Vasilísa

Nor is he the man.

Seredín

I knew it. She'd never suit me! Let the Firebird into the palace, and nothing will come of it but a fire! [*He retires into the crowd.*]

Kírbit

Where is the third prince? It is evidently he Vasilísa seeks. Is there a third?

Fúnduk

A third? There is—but he . . .

Kíkhrom

. . . has a spotty face, walks with a limp, and has no brains.

Zliúka

He has run away. He doesn't want to see Vasilísa. He has run off into the wood, he-he-he. . . . He is lying down somewhere on the grass, as he always does—his hands under his head, his nose pointing to the sky, lying flat! Lucky, if he's not singing, too!

Polosátik

I know where he is! If it's any use, I'll run and tell him; I'll be back in an instant. He is quite near by, in the garden, by the pond, listening to the frogs.

Zliúka

He-he! The frogs are holding assembly, and he is keeping order with a stick! Our third prince is half-witted.

[*Polosátik runs out.*]

Fúnduk

Kírbit Yatmánovich, what man would be his own enemy? I desire such a bride in my house; but I advise thee not to give Vasilísa to Iván. If she wish for a man to boast of, take Churílo; if she wish for a man who will be companionable, let her take Seredín. I am your friend. I do my friend my best obeisance. Buy a horse from the stud, not a pig in a poke. Take a hawk of mine, not a chicken!

Vasilísa

Call him hither, bring him; I wish at once to see him, eye to eye, to take him by the hand and kiss his lips.

Fúnduk

That's a jolly sort of girl!

Kíkhrom

I have an idea! If the third son suit them, it's all the same to us; the price is the same, and the profit may be even greater.

[*Enter Polosátik leading Iván Tsarévich by the hand. The latter has his harp under his other arm.*]

Polosátik

Here is our darling Ványa, the harpist—Iván Tsarévich, Prince of Dark-Russia.

PAUSE

Vasilísa

Iván Tsarévich, beloved bridegroom,
My darling bridegroom, my blue-eyed sweetheart!
Like a pure white birch-tree, a lofty birch-tree,
A maiden flourished with curling tresses,
Like a dark red raspberry, sweet red raspberry!
On the sun she gazed, and sucked in sweetness.
Her stately figure, her eyes swift-darting,
Her lips like coral; above her eyebrows
A brow reflective, her golden tresses
Like ears of corn bewildering,—
A heart of happiness, a mind of wisdom.
A gift of wizardry, a well of prophecy,—

All this for thee was to the world begotten,—
All this for thee had bloomed and blossomed,
That thou shouldst be happy, that thou be contented;
That, for this bounty, thou give gratitude
To Fate the Omnipotent, our sovereign mistress. . . .
Give me thy marriage-ring, Iván Tsarévich.

Iván

It is difficult to speak with thee. I will not spurn the cup of happiness. Let my harp now help me. Only be my song worthy for such an hour!

Whence, oh whence, this golden shower, whence descends it on me streaming?
Why, oh why, hath it thus happened, happiness of long-drawn dreaming?
How shall I uphold this chalice? It is full to overflowing;—
How shall I preserve this bounty, lest it flit without my knowing?
How believe myself? Or can I, can I, ever touch this vision?
What if from such dreams I waken, sobbing in my self-derision?
No, I dare not touch it, nor believe this noontide sun, nor measure
With mine eyes these dreadful wondrous depths of happiness and pleasure.
Yet, my hands stretch forth! Fingers, dare to kiss those fingers yonder!
My heart's blood and my heart's feeling shout, grow hot, rejoice—and wonder
Will my fingers falter, finding nought to caress me or avow me?
Will my hand drop empty, will the weight of woe descend and bow me?
Will my head droop down for grieving and my curly locks grow grey,
When I lose these hopes, these yearnings, which now hold me in their sway?

Churílo

What a long yarn!

Vasilísa

I am alive, I am burning! I am here, all here! I love thee! Dear gentle-featured harpist, thy beseeching song is but too late, for the hour is come for the shout of victory to re-echo.

Polosátik

Rejoice, honourable people! Cry, Hurrah! Iván Tsarévich and Vasilísa the Fair have found each other for all time!

[*Drums, trumpets, shouts.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE V

[*The pond in Tsar Fúnduk's garden. Just before dawn. Frogs croaking. Iván Tsarévich at the edge of the pond.*]

Iván

My beautiful one is asleep. I asked her: 'Tell me whom am I to thank?' 'Sovereign Destiny,' she replied. Oh, Sovereign Omnipotent Destiny, I am in thy debt, in debt eternal and unpayable! I will consent to die, not once, but a thousand times,—to undergo torment and martyrdom,—and will never leave off praising thee. Nothing on earth can ever equal my happiness. . . . How can this be? Why does she love? Sudden she came, mine she became! I was just now caressing her with these very hands! The bliss is too great for my heart to hold. . . . It will soon be dawn; the dew is glistening. The mist is curling over the pond. Oh, think . . . I cannot think! A golden sea at full tide has swept into my heart and splashes majestically, melodiously. I drowned in an ocean ethereal, there where my goddess lies asleep; I sat breathless with love.

Here on this bank some god abideth,
Here the altar of godly power;
Here the heart of the world resideth,
The sun's own goblet, 'mid lilies aflower.
Mine to be the Priest at the Gate;
I will make my censer to glow.
God's descent here I will await,
Flashing like lightning to us below.
Undismayed, I will shield my sight;
Marriage divine is above all desires.
I sing the song of earthly delight;
Our best gift is the sigh that aspires.
There on her purple couch without rising,
Stretching to me her arms like rays—
(She is like springtime, like rejoicing,—
She is like love and melodious lays!):
"Why dost thou linger so long, belovèd?
I have dreamed of none but of thee.
Come, my betrothed, embrace me, kiss me;
I am all thine; be lord unto me!"

Vasilísa [*approaching him*]

Iván Tsarévich.

Iván

My goddess!

Vasilísa

Look around thee! Thou seest—the dawn has kindled with a streak of light to the East; seest thou those grey clouds? Now the pond is turning a cold steel-blue; now that bush is silently rustling. . . . Thou hearest, a shepherd far away plays on his pipes, and the birds are chirruping here and there, as they list. Remember: every moment may be an eternity; every moment may be as a seal. At this moment our love in this life has been sealed, and in all lives to come. .
Here we shall love inseparably; and beyond—everywhere—we shall seek each other. Not marriage for this life is it I offer thee, but for ever. Think, and say, wilt thou?

Iván

Think? I wish only to kiss the earth at thy feet.

Vasilísa

Better kiss me on my lips!

[*They kiss.*]

Open thine eyes, my silly boy! The sun is rising; his rays are kindling the horizon.

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

[*By the staircase in front of the Palace. The Tsar and his Court, jesters, etc.*]

Fúnduk

Oh, how bored I am! [*Yawns.*]

Kíkhrom

Yes, those jesters ought to be whipped! If the King's bored, send the fools to the stable yard.

Polosátik

Alas! our jigs and ingenuity now weary Tsar Fúnduk; all of our devices only annoy him. With all your whippings you cannot whip anything more out of us. But, if you want to cheer the royal spirit, whom should you request but Princess Vasilísa—she is so resourceful, she is all but a magician!

Fúnduk

True, I forgot. . . . Call me my children hither! And bring me my bowl! And let Vasilísa make me merry!

Polosátik

Oh, our dear old King's aweary!
It's the devil of a teazer!
Bring some punch to make him cheery,
Vasilísa—will it please her?

Zliúka

Oh, a wondrous queen—ahá!
Vasilísushka-á-á!
We had wine—a full half-tun—
But, alas, its gone and done!
Now we silly jester-folk
Have forgotten how to jest!
She shall wear our tattered cloak!
We can give ouselves a rest!

[*Enter Iván and Vasilísa, Churílo, Seredín, and others.*]

Fúnduk

Now my pet, Vasilísushka, show us something interesting. I am growing old; I am bored; I nod; and I feel our bare-bone Godfather looking over my shoulder.

Vasilísa

How shall I make thee merry, Tsar Fúnduk?

Fúnduk

If only I knew how! But already thou hast smiled, and I am the merrier. Thy smile is so beautiful; it is as though it gleamed with pearls, and so I too laugh. Oh, Iván has a fine wife!

Vasilísa

Wouldst thou, Tsar, that I should show thy sons, each as he really is?

Fúnduk

But how?

Vasilísa

Do ye all look yonder at that big granary?

Kíkhrom

How wonderful! It has disappeared behind a mist!

Vasilísa

Now I breathe on the mist! Now ye shall behold Churílo's soul!

CHURILO'S SOUL

[*A street with houses on both sides. Churílo, absurdly overdressed, is walking along the street, and after him a chorus of girls, young women and widows.*]

The Women's Chorus

Oh ye gods and holy saints!
He's going so far we're like to faint!
Once we have seen Churílo's face,
After him we all must race.

[*Spoken in dialogue.*]

He looked at me, he aimed at me—
He winked my dear, he winked at me!—
No, 'twas at me he smiled so sweetly,
Like a turkey stepping neatly!—
I shall fall upon my knees
In my love's high ecstasies!—
Look again, Churílo dear!
See you no more sweetmeats here?—
Oh, one word of thy dulcet speech!—
One lock as keepsake, I beseech!—
If he kissed me, I should die!—
Oh, we women are much too shy!—
Whom thou lovest, do but say!—
Order us, and we obey!—

Churílo [*in the vision*]

Bah! How they weary me! I cannot make my way for this rabble of women! I must take my hunting-stock and whip them out of my way! I know I am very dapper, but must they therefore tear me into little bits? Listen, whichever of you I want, I will whistle for, and drive ahead; until then, stop your babble! Oh—the youths are assembling as well!

[*The youths come in, gloomily crowding together and murmuring.*]

The Youths

Envy gnaws us ravenous;
Yet, we're helpless,—all of us!
Let me take my axe and—crash!
His looks simply send us smash!
This accursed Churílo's charms
Sap our strength and slack our arms.

Churílo [*in the vision*]

What are you grumbling about? If you want to enter my service, you are welcome; if you want to contend with me, I'll have you soundly drubbed.

Look! The moon is rising in the sky. You silly thing, what big round eyes you are making at me!

Don't glower at me! I know I'm very pretty, but it isn't for your sake, you white-jawed thing!

The stars, too, play at being coy maidens; they open and blink their eyes. Even in the heavens above, all things that are, are smitten with me! It amazes me how beautiful I am!

If I look into the water, the water stops. The wind dandles my curls on my temples, and hushes. And the animals,—they, too! Look! The little hare darts by, cocks her eye at me, and *halte!*—she is rooted to the ground; and then she tumbles down the dell head over heels! Silly thing, she has fallen in love with me!

So, such a paragon am I, that I take my airy way, knowing that all things on earth are in love with me, and that those who are not, are envious! My life is like one long honey-bath—ha-ha-ha!

[*The mist rises.*]

[*Everyone laughs aloud.*]

Churílo

What are you all cackling about? What is there funny about it? Am I not beauteous?

Polosátik

Oh yes, very beauteous!

Churílo

Then don't cackle! You're a lot of idiots! How I can stand your company!

Fúnduk

Now, my entertainer, my wise-woman, show me Seredín's soul.

SEREDIN'S SOUL.

[*A brilliantly lit dining-room. A table well set with cakes, mead and ale. Children, big and little, sitting on the benches; a stout young wife looking out of the window.*]

The Wife

Hush, children! Daddy's come home!

The Children [*merrily, but in a subdued tone*]

Daddy's come home!

[*Enter Seredín.*]

Seredín

Well, well! We have had a very successful journey! Kiss me, my wife! Children, come and kiss my hands! Have you been good children? I will give each of you who has been good a gingerbread; those who have been up to pranks, a good hiding! Come, sit down at table,—in your proper places—the elder servants at the bottom of the table, holiday style.

[*The servants, entering, bow low to their master; all sit at table and eat in silence.*]

Seredín

Remember, at my table everyone eats in silence. I don't like talking and joking. If you're doing something, do it! If you're eating, eat! Time is not given you for idle chatter and games. That's my rule. Isn't that what I tell you?

From all sides

Yes sir, yes sir, quite so!

A Young Servant [*entering*]

Prince Seredín, Lord and Master, Limón Limónych, our neighbour, is in serious trouble; he has important business, so he says, urgent business. Shall I admit him?

Seredín

Let me see! Limón is a man of consequence. Certainly, admit him! He will be a good friend to have.

Limón Limónych [*entering*]

I salute you, Prince Seredín!

Seredín

Be so good as to come in and sit down. With what may I regale you? [*To his wife*] Serve him, my wife! My servants, lay a place for Limón Limónych.

Limón Limónych

Excuse my disturbing you at table—I am not hungry. My neighbour, the brigand Kózlup, is attacking me; he won't listen to anyone, judge or king. He won't even give any reasons. He is laying waste my fields, burning my villages, and boasts he will drive me out and usurp my little principality. It's a long way to the Tsar Fúnduk, and you're my neighbour, friend Seredín Fúndukovich. Help me! Do me the favour! Send your horsemen out against Kózlup! You are a just man!

Seredín

I am a just man. That is quite true. Please take a cake, friend Limón. Won't you, really? These are very nice chicken patties. Yes, I am a just man; but not a warrior; and I don't like mixing myself with others' affairs. Kózlup himself once asked me to take part in his valorous adventures, which I could not assent to. I said, 'I stand for myself. I do not wish to offend anyone. What's mine's mine; what's yours, yours.' Isn't that what I always tell you?

From all sides

Yes sir, yes sir, quite so!

Seredín

Now, listen! I am sorry for you. You are an honourable man. Kózlup is a powerful man. You had bette- share out with him and come to terms. How, you know best. But don't drag me into it. Now, let me pour you out some mead. No? My mead, Limón Limónych, is mellow, and well-casked.

Limón Limónych

But, I implore you! He will ruin me, this Kózlup! I can only flee before him, or he will not make a light job of it! He will smash me to bits! He will carry off my whole household! He is a monster, is Kózlup!

Seredín

Oh, Limón, there's a deal of truth in what you say, a deal of truth! [*He drinks.*] Such misfortunes will overtake mankind. Destiny throws a cloud over a man's head. When lightning strikes someone down, you say to yourself involuntarily: 'There, but for the grace of the gods, goes the skull of Seredín Fúndukovich!'

Limón Limónych

You are a hard man, Seredín, a heartless man! I go more miserable than I came.

Seredín

No, Limón, I am a kind man. My children, my henchmen, am I not a kind man?

From all sides

A kind man, sir.

Seredín

So, you see?

Limón Limónych

Whither shall I betake myself? Where repose my sorry head?

Seredín

Only—not with me, dear friend. You come in vain. I have no quarrel with Kózlup. I live at peace with all men.

[*Limón Limónych puts on his hat and leaves without bowing.*]

Seredín

What wrong-headed people there are! Woe has befallen him, and he heaps his wrath on the innocent! Well, we have dined, and now we can go to bed. While I was out riding, I was dreaming of my feather-bed. Oh-oh-oh! There is nothing better than the sleep of the just.

[*The mist rises.*]

Seredín

But, my dear little sister, that is nothing short of blackening the family name.

Churílo

Vasilísa has overshot the mark.

Fúnduk

You think so ? She is amusing me. She has made me laugh, till the tears rolled down my cheeks. Seredín is an upright man ! That's about what you will be like, when you marry.

Churílo

Let her just show us her dear Ványa's soul. Ho-ho-ho !

Fúnduk

Yes ! Call up Iván's soul for us to see !

Vasilísa

I do not wish to do so, Tsar. There is very little to laugh at in it ; and you wanted to be amused.

Seredín

No, no ! All of us, please !

Iván

Vasilísa, my incomparable wife, it may not be amusing, but I should like it.

Vasilísa

Then I will, at thy command

THE SOUL OF IVAN

[*Lofty crags, deep precipices. The Green Star glistening over the snowy surface. Iván Tsarévich, in the half-light, walking with a shepherd's crook.*]

Iván

I will succeed, or die ! My feet are all bloodstained, my skin is all torn. But all my strength yet remains with me. Oh my Star wonderful, green as emerald ; I will gain thee or die.

How can I fare? No path anywhere! Silent as 'mong the dead. Wait—a bridge ahead, as fine as a thread, across the precipice. But if there I tread, death awaits me there. Yet I must go on, nor of myself have care; what reck I of life or soul; my star beyond is my one goal. So on, still on, though my head is turning, and black the abyss that beckons me! To my one star my soul is yearning, be it for death or victory!

[*He walks on the threadlike bridge.*]

Someone supported me invisibly; on someone's shoulder I could rest! Oh, my friend, my one affinity, with love for thee I am possessed. Me gently everywhere thou supportest; in the snowdrifts my chill body thou warmest.

[*He crosses the bridge, stops, and looks round.*]

I am cold! I am hungry! Not a house in sight! I am so high up! Oh, my strength fails me! [*He falls.*] Now Death is surely at hand! Yet ere death come, let me see thee,—thou, my friend invisible!

Graciously someone lifts me from the snow, warms me and my limbs miraculously glow. On my way again, a long, long way! But with my eye, I can descry my goal and destiny. To the stars the madman soars!

[*He presses ahead with all his might.*]

Across my path a torrent roars. Shall I plunge there? Then death were unavoidable. Yet surely everywhere about me lurks death. Let us be hardy and inflexible! Death like victory accomplisheth!

[*He flings himself into the waves of the torrent.*]

I am swept away! I am lost! Farewell, my dreams! Farewell, my Star! Oh! [*A wave flings him on the opposite bank. He comes to himself again.*] Where am I? Alive? Victory! My ally, to thee my thanks! But what is this?

Gates heavily barred! With fiery eyes, a tall stern guard! From his shaggy brows the cold blows hard.

He wears a sword. Who art thou? The master of the marvellous hoard? Beyond the gates, the gleam of my Star! Thou, ancient guard, avaunt! With all the force of my will, I rend the bar.

The Guard

Halt! No passage here! Here all effort is frustrated.

Iván

What? I have come so far, and everywhere some secret help accompanied me? And shall I now be forgotten and meekly wait, until the mist engulfeth me? Defend thyself!

[*The Guard smites him with his sword. Iván falls stunned.*]

Iván [*slowly raising himself*]

I cannot believe myself betrayed! Surely I had a goal? Surely those flowers will not fade that have blossomed in my soul? Strength to rise now, I have none! I can wait; my race is run. Perhaps my brothers will come on. Is it death? E'en Death can answer. Yea, Death alone can say me nay.

PAUSE

[*Iván groans and tosses. The Guard stands impassively over him. Suddenly the bars fall apart, the gates open, and behind them stands Vasilísa in a dazzling garment of green, the Star apparently shining from over her head.*]

Iván

Thou? The star shines over thee? Thou wast my aid; art thou my aim and prize? Thou wast the trumpet summoned me; art thou also the pipes of paradise?

[*Vasilísa descends towards him. Then it becomes clear that the Star is as remote as ever, but shines with a light not the same as before.*]

Vasilísa

No, not yet, my Prince, my Pilgrim; I am not the Star; it is still far ahead. Thy vow, my Prince, thy vow still remember—still forward tread!—But thou hast

attained me, who am wise and mighty; we twain will wend the road without end; the secret of birth and the secret of sepulchre, we two together must learn and perpend. Two-fold the links, the links are welded, reaching the Emerald Star on high. Trust me, though *our* ways are nought but desperate, those on the Road shall never more die.

[*The mist rises.*]

Fúnduk

I don't understand a word of it!

Churílo

What a long yarn!

Seredín

Vasilísa has overshot the mark!

Polosatík

Some people it is unwise to understand; but, as to this, one must go on tiptoe, and still never get at it.

Fúnduk

It all bores me frightfully!

Iván [*to Vasilísa*]

Be thou blessèd among women, be thou blessèd. Accursèd be he who, even for a moment, betray such a love!

Vasilísa

Hush! Hush!

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

[*Nursery in the Palace of Iván and Vasilísa. Their baby boy sleeping in the cradle. Mámelfa, as nurse, putting clean baby clothes in order. Vasilísa singing in a low tone.*]

Vasilísa

Homeward turn thy memory,
Newborn manling, heart of me,
Whom, from somewhere far or near,
Hearts concordant summoned here.
In the ocean of fiery foam
Lies Life's uncreated home.
Straight therefrom, into the Dark,
To my bosom flies a spark.
Dipped in blood, the Spark grows warm;
Love shall give thee bodily form.
With my soul's whole potency
I create thee silently,
A new flow'ret from my root,
From the sun another shoot.
Earthly art thou and divine,
Darling thou and son of mine!
Thou didst dive to depths below,
Titan there in strength to grow.
Thence thou shalt on outspread wings
Raise to Heaven all nether things.
Home to Ocean, then, and pay
Dark Earth's tribute to the Day.

Mámelfa [*approaches*]

He is too much like the Prince!

Vasilísa

All the greater joy!

Mámelfa

For what? That he is never one thing or another for long at a time?

Vasilísa

He desires better things. He is a traveller.

Mámelfa

On the threshold—where one stumbles!

Vasilísa

No.

Mámelfa

But yes!

Vasilísa

He is my love.

Mámelfa

Thou lovest weakness, because thyself thou art strong. Thou wert born to be a mother! Now when thou hast a little boy, perhaps thou wilt at last understand the need of a master in the house. Yes, thus it is, little lady.

Vasilísa

Had I twenty children I should love Iván none the less. And what children we all are! Which in itself is splendid.

Mámelfa

Were thy son like to thee, I had said: 'Here is one on whose brows great deeds are written by his ancestry.' But—as he is—who can tell?

Vasilísa

Look how pretty he is!

Mámelfa

Were he but like thee, then!

Vasilísa

Enough! I shall be angry!

[*Enter the Mistress of the Toy-room.*]

Mistress

Will it please the Lady Vasilísa to look what toys have been made in the toy-room?

Vasilísa

Stay thou with him, Mámelfa. I have had carved some wooden toys for him, for which I gave them the design. I will be back immediately; and, when he wakes up, I will have them ready to give to him. [*She leaves the room.*]

Mámelfa [*after a long look at the baby*]

A fine boy! But still, Vasilísa made a mistake. I was all the time looking for another man, Rámmon Nébukhovich. *He* would have had a son! Oh, a son! Yes, a son! Perhaps it might have been the Long-awaited one himself. Yes, perhaps. . . . She is wise,—very wise: but, very wayward. Does she want to be the master? A woman must see God in her husband. If only the man adores, no good can come of it.

[*Enter Ivan and Polosátik.*]

Iván

Where is Vasilísa?

Mámelfa

She has gone to the toy-room.

[*Iván Tsarévich sits down by his son's cradle, Polosátik standing near by.*]

Polosátik

Oh, my dear Ványa. Thou has frightened me. Oh! Say but a word!

[*Iván is silent and melancholy.*]

Polosátik

Thou wast like this erewhile. Thou wouldst sing and laugh—and all at once fall bemused. Beneath thy flowers and thy greensward lie blind depths. Who is it has stung thy soul? What has pierced thy heart?

PAUSE

Polosátik

But I think thou wilt tell this to Vasilísa, and then I faint with fear!

Iván

Thinkest thou she will be angry?

Polosátik

Yet, Ványa, consider for thyself, my friend! You have been married one year. Thy wife is the beauty of beauties,—so sage, that all the sages on earth gape at her; thy son is two months old; yet thou . . .

Iván

Even therefore.

Polosátik

Why so?

Iván

I am too happy. I walk as in a dream. I am not myself. I am so dazzled that I cannot see. I walk in the azure skies. There is nought left to desire. I am melting in molten gold. My soul has softened from surfeit, has become unedged like a ball of butter. Not that I desire woe,—no, but exertion. I want to wish. I want there to be something lacking. That is it! I wish to wish, and my wish is strong, so strong that it makes me unhappy. I am unhappy from happiness. Happiness is not for me. A man must move, but I lie in a lotus-eaters' bower, and slumber. The bird of eternity sings to me. I desire to awake. I am losing myself in bliss. She will understand, will Vasilísa.

Polosátik

[*shaking his head*]. Oh, Iván Tsarévich, ill bodes it if thus it be! Dost thou not value happiness? Dost thou peer out of thy golden paradise into the murk? When thou goest forth from the gates, thou shalt know what sorrow is. And when thou art gazing on the gleam of the rays of lost Eden, then, Tsarévich, thou wilt weep!

Iván [*frightened*]

I should come back, Polosátik; I should run back!

Polosátik

Thou wouldst not be allowed. Thou wouldst be told, ' Thou who dost not value happiness, go forth into the outer darkness ! '

Iván

Do not frighten me, Polosátik ! That makes it terrible.

Polosátik

Stay here !

Iván

I cannot ; it beckons me ; as from a lofty bridge into the abyss, it says, ' Leap down, leap down ! '

Polosátik

It is the demon calling.

Iván

Nay, my soul ! Perchance my soul is a demon.

Polosátik [*aside*]

Mámelfa is listening.

Iván

Didst thou hear me, nurse ? I desire to ask my leave.

Mámelfa

Art thou not the man and the master ? Or hast thou sold thyself for a season like a serf ?

Iván

But thou, how dost thou counsel me ?

Mámelfa

Go thine own way. Whate'er thou dost, do swiftly !

Iván

My heart is torn.

Polosátik

Farewell, Tsarévich ; thou hast—may I put it thus ?—but devisèd thee thy sorrow from very surfeit.

Iván

I know not ; but my heart is troubled.

[*Enter Vasilísa, happy, carrying a bundle of toys in her apron.*]

Vasilísa

Look, Ványa, look ! I have just had these carved out of some of my own designs. There's a fine couple ! The Wandering Jew, thin as a screw ! Look at this Shah Shar Puzán. Look at his dear little Tátar smile !

Polosátik

He who is lean is bitter, he who is fat is sweet ; but surfeit does not always bring happiness. Lady, I kiss thy fingers.

[*He goes out.*]

Vasilísa

Iván Tsarévich is again overcast ? I look again into the belovèd eyes and see the night glooming. Hide not thine eyes ! Gaze into mine ! I want to read thee.

[*She looks hard at him, and becomes serious.*]

Go, Tsarévich, go ! Who holds thee back ? Go, my blessing ! Speed forth swiftly ! Remember, we with our little hero will await thee. [*She smooths his brow.*] Now, be merry ! Within seven days thou shalt be on the road. What ? Thou art easier already ? Yes. So let us have these seven days. Shall it be thus ?

Iván

The tears that are welling in my eyes—it is from adoration of thee.

Vasilísa

I see, I see ! From my eyes bitter tears have flowed. But I am not foolish ! I have released my hawk from his jess. From his eyes sweet tears are flowing. Let my hawk remember he is free. But it is I am in his cage, in his chamber. I have now nowhere to go. My heart is of one piece ; I gave it, indivisible ; I bestowed it, irresumable.

Look, he has woken up joyous! He has woken up with the morning. Godling of the springtime, little lamb, my little bird! Look at these many-coloured toys! He is smiling! The babe has smiled from very joy! The golden trumpets in heaven have resounded. There is little pure joy on earth; for the sake of that, the world exists. Come, my lord Svetozár Ivánovich, come to thy mother's arms!

CURTAIN

SCENE VIII

[*Moonlight. Iván Tsarévich in his tent. A camel close by. Polosatik lying asleep.*]

Iván

If I had wings . . . but I cannot! I hardly close my eyes, and I see Vasilísa. As one thirsting for water, to her I turn; and the leagues between us are riven together. Some demon has driven me so far! Oh, to haste home!

Polosátik

Yes, let us haste away! We have seen enough. I wish to sleep! In my sleep I shall dream of all the countries we have visited, and at dawn the best of them, of my little room in thy palace, where I am at home to live, to sing like a canary! But listen, what is this strange music that is being wafted towards us? As if the Lady Vasilísa were laughing at us from below, as if she were trickling a chain of pearls. The heart trembles and sinks; sometimes to weep is comforting. It makes one think Iván has attained happiness!

Iván

Sleep, sleep, good jester, sleep on!

PAUSE

Iván

To me sleep is loth to come. I see my home wraithlike: my wife smiling, my son putting forth his hands. I am sore at heart and will ease me.

[*He takes his harp.*]

Billows of the ocean flow between us,
Many leagues between us of the yellow sands;
Will my song fly to the heart belovèd,
Will it wake an answer in the loving heart?
No, it halts for pinions of the azure,
And the winds support not its gay plumage;
Half way across my song now faltereth,

And pants for breath and fails and fainteth.
Now my song is for its death preparing;
Now its golden beak in blood empurples.—
Oh, my wife, my one belovèd,
Step forth at night-time on thy stairway.
Gaze on the moon; let summer breezes whisper,
And for me, my wife, for me, be anguished!
Be anguished, and sing, with thy voice tuneful,
Sing, with thy voice silver-ringing!
Like a swan, bid thy song melodious
On white wings surmount the horizon,
Fly to me in the land far-wondrous!—
But, half way across, it flags and wearies,
Painfully flaps its wings, so wearily. . . .
And half way across, two birds are meeting;
They have met and are comforted.
They sing a new song, like their first singing;
They embrace again, breast to breast clasping;
And they kiss again, beak to beak cleaving.
Our souls in a blissful throbbing
In cloudland have met in the moonlight.

[*As soon as the sound of Iván's song and harp dies away, music is heard inexpressibly and unbearably sweet, like the tinkling of lights*]

Iván

What is this? Never in my life have I heard such songs! Such harmonies have never been known! [*Raises himself.*] What are these marvellous travellers?

[*Ostriches pass by in pairs, in glittering harness. Strange persons are seated on silver saddles. It is impossible to tell their sex. They wear silver chain mail instead of clothes, and their skin is like white ivory, their bodies are brittle, and their heads top-heavy with the weight of their black hair; their eyes are terribly big and mournful, their mouths also mournful but small. The first ostrich is led by the bridle by one such boy-maiden, who, however, wears an Arab* burnus *and* fez; *the other boy-maiden mounted on this first ostrich, rides with his head thrown back, looking at the moon with both eyes wide open, like two dark globes of night, and singing. The others are playing on strange instruments.*]

The Boy-Maiden [*sings*]

Nannaú knuyayá-nannau-ú-u
Minyatá-a-ai.
Ei-ai
Lyu-lyú
Tannagó natalpí Kannayá-a
Ta-nga-nga-a
Ei-ai,
Gar-gár,
Ger-gér.

Iván

Halt! What manner of people are ye?

The Caravan Leader

Hail, good traveller! We are returning to the land of Aê-va-ú, the Land of the Moon. We have descended from our mountains to get the golden sand and other materials. I am the interpreter, Ngi, and these are Pyati-ai, the rays of the moon, our Knights and Ambassadors.

Iván

Is your country far away?

Ngi

It is near by. One day's journey. Only, none but we know the way thither.

Iván

And what is the odour that makes me faint and blissful?

Ngi

That is tummí-yayú, the scents of our Queen.

Iván

And where is your Queen?

Ngi

At home. Wherever we go we carry with us her scents and her portriat.

Iván

Show me the portrait.

Ngi

It is better not. You will be enchanted. Her hair and eyes are not those of humans; but a human cannot tear himself away from them. She scarcely ever moves; but when she raises her hand to her head or smiles, the Mighty Ones themselves stretch forth their arms and are grateful.

Iván

What is her name?

Ngi

Her name is Yálya-m, the dumb Queen.

Iván

Why is she so called?

Ngi

Because she never speaks.

Iván

Let me look at the portrait.

[*Ngi speaks to the boy-maiden on the camel, who was singing. The latter takes a little jewelled portrait out of his case.*]

Ngi

Look!

Iván

Take me with you!

Ngi

I cannot!

Iván

I desire it!

Ngi [*looks at him fixedly*]

Let us go!

[*Takes him by the hand and they pass on.*]

Nannaú, knuyayá nannau-ú-u
Minyatá-a-ai
Ei-ai
Lyu-lyú.

[*The song dies in the distance.*]

Polosátik [*awakening*]

Where art thou, Iván Tsarévich ?—Where is he ? What, he has gone away ? Where has he gone ? Oh,—alas ! Look ! He has left his harp behind and forgotten it, and Polosátik as well. He has forgotten his jester Polosátik. [*He weeps.*]

[*The song is heard from a great distance.*]

Tannagó natalpí kannayá-a
T-nga-nga-ai,
Ei-ai,
Gar-gár,
Ger-gér.
Aeó-aeó lyu-lyu-ú.

INTERLUDE

[*A blue, black and silver curtain descends. The interpreter Ngi advances to the front of the stage. He is dressed in a silver net and ruby fez with a blue tassel on his abundant locks. He sits down on the bench in front, takes out a silver flute, and plays a song on it Then he sings.*

Uya-lálu,
Layu-lálu,
Ammenai, layáyi loyálu.

Ngi

I am going to tell you about Aê-va-ú.

I love my country. There is no sun there, no night ; it is the colour of the blue moon. A little country and fresh, is Ae-va-ú.

There are lakes there, and they are calm.

Pashti-Muri, the white lizard, raises his head on his flexible neck out of the water to the moon, and looks up with his amber coloured eyes, and says: yagiya-yagiya-yagi.

There are rivers there; they foam and purl softly. Their song is called *frilul-zelzar*, the murmur of the earth. This is the name we give to every other prayer. The plants there have broad pale leaves or long flexible needles. Our flowers are very, very much larger than the heads of men; and they are fragrant. Most lovely of all is the odour of the flower *Ya-yu*. It is of this our Queen smells and the Spring smells.

We call Spring the season when *Ya-yu* blossoms. We all then are gently elated. We go forth into the woods, and sing, and love. Winter we call, the season when *Ya-yu* withers and dies. We all then return to work. What work? We, too, have work to do. Our work we call *pfa-shakë*, which means 'compulsory trifles.'

We build palaces. The columns are very slender, for everything amongst us is very light; I do not know why. Our people find it very difficult to walk on the earth; but we dance when we are at home; and we therefore call your earth *rgarg*, which means 'clumsiness.' We build slender towers of many-coloured glass.

I could tell you more, but you would not believe me.

Very well! I will go! But I wanted you to know something about Aê-va-ú.

Prince Iván is there now. He is our guest. We call him Liumi-Taize-Vevan, dear guest Iván. Will you also please be our dear guests for a few minutes?

Béyuli-liumi-taizei! Greetings, dear guests!

(*The Curtain rises. He goes.*]

SCENE IX

[*The Court of Queen Yálya-m, in the country of Ae-va-ú. The light there is always pale blue, even blue. The further wall is open, the patterned canopy supported by very thin columns. A glittering blue landscape vaguely discernible beyond. The rooms are filled with marvellous plants with big leaves and many blooms. Birds with long tails and crests perch on silver trapezia, multi-coloured patterned lanterns; from various directions thin streams of fountains can be heard.*

On the bed, facing the audience, in the attitude of a Sphinx, lies Yálya-m, looking out with kindly childish eyes. Her small mouth is that of a mute, her luxuriant curly hair seems alive. About her, other women and boy-maidens. Iván Tsarévich near the bed lying on cushions.

When the curtain rises music behind the stage is heard, brittle as glass; and someone singing.]

Yai, matebézi amaleli yai.
Ii samasama eiyavani ii.

[*Very gradually string instruments and glasses and bells chime in.*]

Iván

How much time has elapsed since I came here? Ten years? A hundred years? How can I tell?—I feel so strange here and everything remains strange to me. It is as though I had died, and were really in the world beyond.

Sometimes one recovers from the forgetfulness and one thinks many hours have passed by,—and sees that Yálya-m, who had been raising her hand up to her head, is just dropping it. Or, again one thinks a moment only has passed by; but the flowers that had been so fresh are already faded.

I myself have become as dull as a flower; there is next to nothing left in me of the human. Happy? Unhappy? Once upon a time I was happy, and I quitted my happiness. And now—a dream, a strange blue dream, which benumbs me.

Yálya attracts me, for she is strange, and her scents intoxicate one. There is nothing human in her. It is as impossible not to stoop and smell the budding rose in the summer on Earth.

Yálya! Yálya! Unseal thy lips! Say something, if only in thine own tongue! Yálya! Yálya! Smile! Thou seest I smile. Smile! It is like a seal, the red spot of her lips.

[*He gets up and approaches her.*]

Yálya-m, I am putting my hand on thy luxuriant head. My hand is heavy, Yálya-m, it is bowing thy head down; now look at me! Let, if only thine eyes, tell me, dost thou like me to touch thee, or is it unpleasant? The two dark eyes do not change.

[*He seizes her violently.*]

I have clasped thee to me. Thou crackest in my embrace! I kiss, kiss that red seal! Become hot, ye red lips! Do thou embrace. . . . [*Casting her from him*]. . . . Doll!

[*Yálya-m again takes the pose of a sphinx.*]

Oh, you stupid beauty, Yálya-m,—listen to me! I will go away altogether! I will leave thee! Ngi! Ngi! Where is the interpreter?

[*One of the boy-maidens goes out.*]

Iván

How shall I shatter the wall? Passion, possession, even birth, will not shatter the wall!

Ngi [*enters*]

What wilt thou, Liumi-Taize-Vevan?

Iván

Tell thy queen I wish to go.

Ngi

There is no need.

Iván

Tell her!

Ngi

It is painful!

Iván

Tell her!

Ngi

Yálya-m, Liumi-Taize-Vevan iliif-vau itulaki-ho.

Yálya-m [rising, almost throws herself back, wringing her hands and groaning]. A-a, á-a! ó-o, ó-o!

Iván

She loves me?

Ngi

Certainly she loves thee! Everyone knows this. Thinkest thou she would have had thy daughter, did she not love thee? We have no slaves, as ye have—we have only women.

Iván

Why then is she wordless, smileless, kissless?

Ngi

She is Yálya-m. She does all these things. But she does it inside her heart.

Iván

Yet, when I asked her questions, she deigned to dance. Tell her now, I ask her to dance.

Ngi

Yalya-m, Liumi-Taize-Vevan meliliif-vau noyámi Yálya-yayul-lyayál.

Iván

Oh, is 'layúl-layál' 'to dance'?

Ngi

It means to dance, Liumi-Taize.

Iván

She will?

Ngi

Thou seest.

[*All the suite quickly take up triangles and strange little drums and thin flutes, and one of them sings, whilst Yálya-m raises herself, closes her eyes, and stands in the middle of the round carpet. Without moving her legs, she sways her body, arms and head.*]

The Song

Ai-Yálya-m-be
Ai-Lattya-nga-belem
Ten-zeni-yai-rru
Ten zeni zang belem.

[*She stops, opens her eyes, sets her hair straight with a wonderful gesture of her thin arm, then quietly re-assumes her favourite attitude. Meantime, while the same music proceeds, a sturdy, pretty woman in lunar dress, holding a one-year-old baby high above her head, moves rhythmically, surrounded by the Court, towards the bed, advancing and receding. The minstrels sing more joyously and quickly.*]

The Song

Pong-Yalya-da-be,
Pong-Lattya-Ne belam,
Lyu-zani-ii-go
Lyu-gniyi-da-belem.

[*The people of the country all smile.*]

Iván

What has happened? What are you rejoicing at?

The Woman with the Child [*asks it*]

Tiyi-Yalya-da: mama?

The Child

Mama.

[*They all smile.*]

Ngi

Thy daughter has to-day said, 'Mama.' She is a princess who has said it. She is Yálya-da. Therefore we are glad.

Iván

And what does 'Mama' mean in your language?

Ngi

The same as in yours.

The Woman with the Child [approaches the Princess and says to the child]

Tiiki Yalya-ki-da : ma-ma.

The Child

Ma-ma.

[*Then Yálya-m smiles. All the birds are excited. The flowers open wider; the leaves rustle in the blue atmosphere. The others all clap their hands and open their little mouths in one happy exclamation, 'Oh!' Iván Tsarévich smiles with the same very kindly smile.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE X

[*A room in Vasilísa's palace. At the back, a large mirror, with a curtain raised to the violet borders of it. Red candles in silver candlesticks burning beside it. Vasilísa sitting on a tripod beside the mirror, and anxiously looking into it, her golden hair over her shoulders, her hands loosely on her knees.*]

Mámelfa [*enters*]

Thou seest, little lady, it is empty. It is only thy thin face thou seest there, and thy tremulous eyes. There is nothing else. He is gone.

Vasilísa

No, he is not dead. I have enquired everywhere. I asked even Marana, and he is not among the dead.

Mámelfa

Nor yet among the living.

Vasilísa

My thoughts cannot find his image. I have, in the darkness of thought, searched the seven worlds—and no one knows.

Mámelfa

Stop wondering, then! Cease loving!

Vasilísa

I can cease to live, but never to love. The seal has been set. My soul has been tinged for eternity with love to its last drop of blood. And this is well; for though he is not, love is; and the little Knight also is. I have Svetozár. Were it not for him, there were nought to keep me on earth, I would find wings, or even half-wings, and fly away. I might be happy with the trolls and the nymphs; I might fly thither; but I must remain with Svetozár. He is sufficient for my happiness. So great is my little boy, that sometimes I grieve for Iván, and wonder—is it not a sin? Is not happiness passing thee by? Does not the voice of happiness echo here in the garden?

A Servant [*running in*]

Lady Vasilísa, Polosátik has arrived.

Vasilísa

Polosátik? This is a reproof to me, who am called wise; I was enquiring of everyone and forgot Polosátik. So little we think of little things. Bring him in! Bring him in!

[*Enter Polosátik. He is bowed and grey.*]

Vasilísa

Polosátik, dear friend, where is Iván, the sweet Prince? Where didst thou leave him? What news does thou bear me of him?

Polosátik

Vasilísa, I never left Iván, the sweet Prince! He, Iván, left me in the distant Sahara and the shifting sands, forgot me,—deserted me.

Vasilísa

Forgot thee?

Polosátik

Well, what if he did? I am very little. But not only me. His harp, as well.

Vasilísa

Where is his harp?

Polosátik

I have it here.

Vasilísa

Give it to me! [*She takes the harp and presses it to her bosom.*] Tell me . . .

Polosátik

We went to sleep, and I woke up, and he was not there. But there was a fragrance around inexpressibly sweet. Has he been taken up to heaven?

PAUSE

I am tired. Let me only rest!

Vasilísa

Come,—wash, warm and feed and tend Polosátik. Put him to sleep on a feather bed. He is my friend, not my jester.

[*Kisses him on his brow.*]

Polosátik

Lady, when I shall die my body will decay, but thy kiss shall rise from the grave like a beam of fire and kindle aloft with the stars.

[*He kisses her hand and goes out.*]

Mámelfa

Give me the harp! What song of his shall I recall? It shall be the first song he sang to thee.

[*She strikes the strings and sings.*]

Whence, oh whence this golden shower, whence descends
it on me streaming?
Why, oh why, hath it thus happened, happiness of
long-drawn dreaming?
How shall I uphold this chalice? It is full to over-
flowing.

Look! Look!

[*The mirror shows Yálya-m's room, the Queen herself in the attitude of a sphinx, and Iván looking at her little lips. Vasilísa quickly sweeps the curtain over the mirror.*]

Mámelfa

Thou sawest it?

[*Vasilísa says nothing.*]

Mámelfa

He has betrayed thee?

Vasilísa

No.

Mámelfa

He has betrayed thee. He loves another!

Vasilísa [*in anguish*]

He? He cannot, cannot love another!

Mámelfa

Console thyself! Forget him now! Be not anxious, and I will think of him!

Vasilísa

Dare not to do him any harm!

Mámelfa

I will not do him any harm,—but thou, forget him!

Vasilísa

Leave me!

[*Mámelfa goes out. Vasilísa throws the curtain back again, strikes the chords of the song again, and the vision reappears. She looks long at Ydlya.*]

Vasilísa

The flow'ret is alive. [*She looks at Iván.*] But thou art a wrong-doer! I see thy soul. My pattern on it is effaced. Thou hast forgotten Vasilísa. Thou has forgotten Vasilísa for a childish fairy-tale. [*In grief.*] Iván the fool, Iván the fool! Thou has riven the ring; it cannot be welded again!

[*She lets the curtain drop, and sighs.*]

Nurses, attendants, bring me my little Knight.

[*A nurse brings in little Svetozár. He has a big helmet on his head and a big sword in his belt.*]

Thy grandfather's helm and sword! Oh, my little warrior, against whom art thou campaigning? Thou wilt hurt somebody. Dost thou wish to hurt somebody?

Svetozár

I want to defend peoples, Mama.

Vasilísa

But whom?

Svetozár

The dood peoples.

Vasilísa [*smiles*]

And against whom ?

Svetozár

The naughty peoples who till them.

Vasilísa

Who told thee this ?

Svetozár

I saw it my own self.

Vasilísa

Where ?

Svetozár

Zliúka was beating his doggy Shalikh.

Vasilísa [*seriously*]

There will be work enough for thy sword all thy life long. Do, Svetozár, defend the good ! Take thy helmet off and let me kiss thy face, my little treasure ! There is no sweeter blessing for thy mother's lips than to kiss thy face !

Svetozár [*in her arms*]

Mama, mama, dear mama !

[*Kirbit has entered and looks on.*]

Kírbit

Daughter, dismiss thy suite ! I am come to speak with thee.

Vasilísa

Do ye all go !

[*They all go, taking Svetozár with them.*]

Kírbit

I am come to speak with thee. [*Pause.*] Is Iván no longer dear to thee ?

Vasilísa

I know not ; but I can tell thee—I care not, though he have died.

Kírbit

Thou art, then, widowed ?

Vasilísa

Yes.

Kírbit

Become the wife of Merodákh !

Vasilísa

I honour him ; but I have had enough of the love of men.
I have whom I may love otherwise.

Kírbit

Not for thine own sake, shouldst thou marry him.

Vasilísa

I will not serve another man in love ;
For who am I ? My own will,—not a slave !

Kírbit

But, ponder ! For thyself, thou canst be wife,
And for one other's sake, yet not a husband's.
Thou canst yet love another for his child.

Vasilísa

I have my son.

Kírbit

Yet listen, daughter, to me !
The world awaiteth. Nature stirs to spring-time ;
A mighty spirit moves upon the earth !
For Merodákh begets a son called Mítra,—
Mítra, whom Vasilísa bears to him !
Shall any doubt or feeling or desire
Dare to obstruct the golden road of Being ?

Vasilísa

But Svetozár ?

Kírbit

I see him with his sword,
Knight-errant, golden-locked, enter the world ;
And I see, leaning on his shoulder, Love—
Aye, Love himself, in person come to earth.
But not for thee the higher powers to obey :—
Thou—thou art free, and nowhere shall be found—
In heaven, on earth, or in the hells beneath—
Any to sway thy will. Yet thou must obey
The holy Mítra, must obey thy son,
The Child Divine who here shall be conceived ;
For at the gate of space there waiteth now
The Long-awaited.

Vasilísa [bowing]

Be it so at thy will !

[*A melodious, majestic trumpet call. The doors roll open. Two Assyrian warriors sound golden trumpets, two others lead enchained lions. Outside there is a thunder of chariot wheels and a clash of many weapons.*

Dignified, with eyes like stars, dark locks and black beard, enter Merodákh-Rámmon, in the guise of a Ninevean King. Merodákh and Vasilísa, the golden tressed and blue eyed, stand facing each other ; she bears herself erect, in a dress of flaming red brocade]

Merodákh

Oh, wondrous, beauteous maiden, all has been accomplished !
If I might only deem that thou wilt deign to love me,
I pray thee speak !
But, it may be that thou canst only love the humble ;
I will be weak.
Or, dost thou wish me as a young lamb to be gentle ?
I will be meek.
Or, if thou will, by my mysterious enchantment,
I should assume the form and shape of Iochánan,—
I will obey.
For I, the King, the demi-god, the great magician,
I, Merodákh-Rámmon, when I see Vasilísa,
Resign my sway.

Vasilísa

I hail thee, father of our sovereign Mítra !

[*Golden trumpets sound prolonged thunderous chords.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE XI

[*Room in Ydlya-m's palace. The same decoration as before. Ydlya in the the same attitude, but near her Ydlya-da playing in her cradle. Iván asleep on cushions and very many flowers around him.*]

Voices [*from behind, far off*]

Pong. Tanzei.

Voices [*from behind, nearer*]

Pong. Tanzei.

Ngi [*enters*]

Yálya-m, Taize iliif-be.

[*Mámelfa enters with her basket on a yoke; she is accompanied all the way by a red ray, crossing the motionless soft blue of Va-ú.*]

Mámelfa

Oh—how wonderful! What places one can travel to nowadays! Oh! But who is he? He belongs to us, not to you.

Ngi

He is Taize-Vevan, the husband of our Queen. He came from the land of Rgarg. So too have you, I think?

Mámelfa

Where is your Queen? Ah, I see, I see! She is indeed beauteous! I bow to the earth to thee, Queen Yálya! Wouldst thou not like some rosy apples from Earth? I was told ye had no apples. Please ask the Queen, may I offer her some fruit?

Ngi

Yálya-m, Taize-de, biya haargarga-bombi?

[*Ydlya-m sits up, and nods her head.*]

Mámelfa [*opening the basket*]

Here they are, apples ruddy as your sun! This is the finest of them. Taste it!

[*Ydlya accepts the apple, and smiles. She takes it, claps her hands, and says:*

O!

She throws the apple into the air and catches it. Then she turns to the child and gives her the apple. The child turns it round in her hands and carries it up to her mouth. Ydlya quickly takes the apple away She plays with it in front of the child, and suddenly bites it. She immediately rises, becomes erect, straight as a cord, and falls down, as if stricken. A moment of silence. Mdmelfa crumples up like a spider, her hands in her basket.

The Moon-people approach the bed on tiptoe on all sides. One of them touches Ydlya's hand, and utters a shrill and despairing cry of:

Mga!

The cry is taken up by all present. 'Mga! Mga!' *The flowers shrivel, the leaves droop, the birds flutter, the fountains stop.*

Iván [*awakening*]

What strange cries! Oh, I have been asleep! I was nowhere and—where am I now? Oh yes, in Ae-va-ú. Who is shouting and crying? [*He springs to his feet.*] What has happened?

[*Mdmelfa rises, takes up the basket of accursed apples, and flings it with all her might into the depths of the scene. A terrible explosion: the blue world bursts asunder; a vast precipice becomes visible, a black abyss with sharp crags. Loud cries of.*

Mga!

The Moon-people take up the dead Princess and carry her away anxiously and hurriedly. Mdmelfa leaves hastily, wrapping herself in a black cloak. Iván rubs his eyes.]

Iván

What has happened? What has happened? I am trembling all over. My teeth are chattering.

[*The blue, black and silver curtain drops. A dim sound of singing is heard from behind the curtain, and from time to time a horrible rasping of iron. The curtain rises. Burning torches pass across the stage, suspended in double file, and pass beyond, sinking lower and lower, beyond the broken crags into the black abyss. A procession marches at a slow pace in the same direction. In the first rank come the leaders of Va-ú, in blue armour and plumed helmets, thick-set men looking like crabs. The heads of their lances gleam. They march with a heavy tread onward into the gulf, into the black void. They are followed by tall women in light blue shrouds, carrying the coffin of Ydlya-m, which glitters with moving colours, sparks and*

reflections of blue. Next come the boy-maidens, carrying long flowers, and birds on their shoulders, and utensils and vessels. Iván stands and looks at Yádlya-da's cradle with terror in his eyes. They are all singing:

Rrakh-mene-gugulimm-reddai,
Zhdai naim gugulimm hagadzan
Mga!

[*At this last cry a ghastly rasping of iron.*]

Yaff-savvavá-ravvái, reddai
Zhdai ugrufú, ravvai-hagadzan
Mga!

[*The coffin is let into the grave and plunges into the abyss of the black void, the rest follow, down to the end of the procession. The last couple of boy-maidens disappear, wringing their hands, crying:*

Mga! Mga!

Then the torches go out one after another and the stage becomes dark].

Iván [*at the front of the stage, as pale as chalk, but his face lit by some strange beacon of light*]

Mga! Mga! That means death. Everything has been destroyed and has perished here. My little girl, my poor little one, let us follow Mama! [*He takes her by the hands and raises her high above his head.*] Some madness has seized me. I go to meet death face to face. No, those torches cannot light our path.

Now on the road accursèd we will go.
Hell's mouth is gaping for us there below.
Hail Death!
Now say farewell, there is nought to fulfil,
Better our destruction than insolent ill,—
Hail Death!

[*He goes to the edge of the precipice. At the very edge, the image of Vasilisa arises with a warning gesture. Iván steps back in even greater confusion.*

Iván

What have I remembered?

Two-fold the links,
The links are welded,
Reaching the Emerald Star on high.
Trust me; though our ways are nought but desperate,
Those on the Road shall never more die.

[*The vision of Vasilísa vanishes, but the Emerald Star shines brightly over the abyss.*]

Iván

Daughter, let us go hence, let us go seek a road to Vasilísa. Thither there is no road! To her heart there is no road! Where shall be my home or a shelter for me? The grave, or my own country! What has become of me? I am wretched, I am an orphan. Forgive me, Vasilísa, forgive me!—But my daughter, I will not abandon her. Yálya-da, Yálya-da, thou criest? I also am crying, little Yálya-da!

[*He goes stumbling into the darkness, not knowing where.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE XII

[*A boundless yellow desert of sand. An ass too tired to move. On the ass on one side a pack, on the other a basket in which Ydlya-da, now two years old, is sitting. Iván, looking older, with a long beard and an Arab* burnus *walking leaning on a big staff.*]

Iván

The beast is weary, and even-tide draws nigh.
The sun that scorched us, all day merciless,
Is tranquil now, and his slant beams but graze
The waves of this great sea of sand and merge
A yellow shadow into the vast blue
Around me. So let us rest awhile here.

[*He slowly unloads the ass. He plants a post and makes a primitive tent, under the shadow of which he puts the basket with the child. The ass stands dolefully by. Iván throws it a handful of dry grass.*]

Iván

Was I not told it was but one day's journey
To where the Northern caravans set forth?
Three days we now have travelled, so may-be
Have lost our way. Then we shall perish? No,
Perish we cannot! This I will not believe,—
Nought will I e'er believe but death itself,
Which can and may pronounce the baleful No.
Till then we will fight on.—Was that a sound?
A bell? Aye, a bell it was. Nor far from here
My caravans.

[*Listens.*]

The sound—it now seems nearer.

[*Makes a speaking trumpet of his hands.*]

Hallo, hallo!

[*Answering shouts of* 'Hallo! Hallo!']

Iván

They answer and draw nigh.

He steps back a little way to meet them and looks round. Three travellers with long shepherds' crooks enter, one an old man, one middle-aged, the third, a youth.]

Iván [bowing to the earth]

All welcome to you, Sheikhs ! Oh, will ye favour
Eván, your sorry servant,—bid him mount
Your camels Northward bound ?

Eldest Traveller

Hail, hail to thee, poor man ! Whither goest thou ?

Iván

I travel to the North ; I am returning
Home, to my distant home, which lies afar,
Where for six months the ice enchains the streams.

Eldest Traveller

We, too, go thither, to that land of midnight,
To the Dark-Russian land ; thither do we,
The sages, Azar, Afraim and Geza,
Now make our weary way.

Iván

My heart is troubled.
Thither, I too would go.

Eldest Traveller

But wherefore so ?

Iván

There, there, maybe, my old, old father lives—
Yet lives ; my brothers should be there, my wife,
And, too, my son.

Second Traveller

But what the grave affairs
Could wrest thee from a hearth whose memory
Makes tears well from thine eyes ?

Iván

Desire to see
Strange lands.

Second Traveller

I understand then ; thou art not
Mean-souled ; but thy mind is curious, thy spirit
Restless. Yet, of all lands on earth, more strange,
More marvellous than Dark-Russia is none.
Thence streams the light. There rules the wondrous Tsar
And his most wondrous Queen, to whom is born,
As we, the Magi and Chaldeans trow,
Mítra, who is on earth the god incarnate.

Iván

What Tsar is it holds sway now o'er this Dark-Russia ?
Has then the old Tsar Fúnduk died ?

Eldest Traveller

Not dead :
But slumbering in peace, departing hence.
And, like the sun to earth, there has come down
To Russia, Rámmon-Merodákh-Kaldú.

Iván

Whence came to rule my native land a prince
So mighty ? From the East, as conqueror,
To hew a passage to the throne ?

Second Traveller

Not thus ;—
Fúnduk himself surrendered his own throne
To Merodákh ; his sons went their own way,—
For who durst argue with the all-wise demi-god,
In whom, in heaviest hour of invasion's stress,
The only refuge then appeared ? Merodákh
Came down to them, obeying Heaven's will,
Who gave the Star to him to be his wife.
For, as there shines beside Shamash-Baál,
The Sun-god, beauteous Ishtar at the morn,
So doth the sovereign empress Vasilísa
Fill all the world with softest, sweetest light.

Iván

This I had long foreseen, but now . . .

Second Traveller

So thither
Let us repair, if there thou too wouldst go;
For we desire to offer to the Babe,
Mítra, our myrrh and frankincense and gold.

CURTAIN

SCENE XIII

[*Garden in Vasilisa's palace. By the pond at night Iván Tsarévich sitting in a ragged dress by the water-edge.*]

Iván

Two years . . . two years have now passed by since I returned. I have not dared to look on her. I am held back by some iron hand. She is happy, and I am an evil-doer I serve as a shepherd in my father's house, and thus I keep my beautiful little daughter, lovely as a fairy-tale. Thus I live, and still, somehow, I hope for something. I have only seen her twice Once with the King on a lofty chariot. They are a noble pair. Anyone who sees them carries away in his heart a reverend joy. The other time, in a field, by herself Whither was she going? Her eyes were half closed in thought . . . How my heart throbbed! How I yearned to cast myself at her feet! But some invisible iron hand bent me to the ground, held me firmly down. The wind is blowing . . . it is cold. . . . I wander like one of the damned; I seek something on the way, and I know what I am seeking. It will soon be dawn. There I see a streak of light to the East kindling. . . [*Leaps to his feet*]. Stop, Iván, remember! This is the very place. . . . 'Look around thee! Thou seest—the dawn has kindled with a streak of light to the East; seest thou those grey clouds? Now the pond is turning a cold steel blue. Now that bush is silently rustling. . . . Thou hearest, a shepherd far away plays on his pipes, and the birds are chirruping, here and there, as they list. Remember: every moment may be an eternity; every moment may be a seal. At this moment our love in this life has been sealed, and in all lives to come. . . .' [*He sobs silently.*]

[*Meanwhile, a lofty black barge appears on the pond, with Merodákh standing at the bow, rowed by two Assyrians*]

Merodákh

Stop! Who is this sobbing here?

[Iván raises his head and bows to the earth]

Merodákh [looking at Iván]

Stand, and let me see thee. . . .

[Looks at him long, and says to himself]

Burn him to ashes . . . expel him. . . .

Iván

Thou tremblest, Lord, so let me die
The last death of eternity,
Of rest and non-existence!

Merodákh

God, even, cannot slay what is immortal.

Iván

Then I, if I must live, am everywhere
One living hope, that I attain forgiveness.

Merodákh

Thou wilt contend?

Iván

Slay me, I will thank thee.

Merodákh

I have no strength, no strength to vie with thee.—
Thou traitor, faithless menial, I might
Consume thee in a fire, like to a straw. . . .
Yet I am powerless. Oh Iochánan,
My happy brother. . . .

Iván

Oh, thine eyes are sad!

Merodákh

But not for long! None is there who dare pity
Me, Merodákh-Rámmon, the great enchanter,
Father and King, who, plighted unto sorrow,
Must wear the clinging marriage-wreath of woe.
Row on! Row on!

[The barge disappears in the mist, like a ghostly vision.]

PAUSE

Iván

This is a marvel! I shudder as though fever-stricken
My eyes are full of tears of terror and joy Will something happen?

[*Enter a servant*]

Servant

Where are you? I have been searching high and low for you! The little girl told me you were wandering in the garden Come! King Seredin is calling for you He'll tear you to shreds!

Ivan

What for?

Servant

He asks no questions, he is Seredin It would be better did he hit you outright, for when he starts using the sharpness of his tongue, there is nothing more to be said

Ivan

I will go, but I will fetch my daughter She has woken up, and is frightened, when she is alone, for she is always with me

[*They go out*]

CURTAIN

SCENE XIV

[*Merodákh's new palace in Fúnduk's capital city. Two gigantic pylons with statues of winged gods, and a majestic staircase of seven-hued steps leading up to the palace portal. Mítra and Svetozár sitting on the bottom step. Svetozár is carving a little boat, Mítra is watching him work. Enter Servant, Iván and Yálya-da*]

Servant

This is the way to Seredín. Don't take the little girl any further! Seredín is none too fond of his own children, so leave her here. No one will hurt her here.

Svetozár [*raises his head*]

Where I am, no one may hurt anybody.

[*He fixes his look in astonishment on the little girl. Iván follows the servant, Yálya-da remains behind.*]

Svetozár

Mítrochka, Mítrenka, do look what a beautiful little girl! Just as if she had stepped out of a fairy story!

Mítra [*lifting his blue eyes under heavy eyebrows*].

Yes.

Svetozár

Come here, little girl, come here! Don't be afraid!

Yálya-da

What is there to be afraid of? Here I am.

Svetozár

How pretty she is! Her hair—do look, Mítra, her hair is like braided silk! And what big eyes! Bigger than yours! And the little mouth—ha-ha-ha!—is as small as a strawberry. Little girl, kiss me, little bird!

Yálya-da

Yes, tiss me. [*They kiss.*]

Mítra [*putting out his lips*]

Me too! [*They kiss.*]

Svetozár

Whom do you belong to ?

Yálya-da

My papa herds your cows.

Svetozár

Oh, does he ? Will he let you come and play with us ?

Yálya-da

Yes, he will.

Svetozár

And will Mama ?

Yálya-da

My Mama is a Princess of the Moon. She died. She went into the night. She was even prettier than me. She never said anything, but only danced. She loved papa, loved me, bit an apple, and *Mga*—she died. Papa has told me about her.

Svetozár

You hear, Mítrik ? It's just like a fairy-tale. Well, now I love you, little girl. What is your name ?

Yálya-da

Yálya-da.

Svetozár

Yálya-dew-berry ! My little strawberry, I take you by your little ears, and kiss your eyes. Tell me, doesn't anyone, anyone, hurt you ? I am a Knight, and am under a vow to defend the weak

Yálya-da

No one ever hurts me. Who is your mama ?

Svetozár

My mama ? My mama is Vasilísa. There is one sun in the heavens and one Vasilísa on earth. My mama is the queen of all mamas.

Yálya-da

Is she pretty? Is she alive? Does she pet you?

Svetozár

Yes, she does.

Yálya-da [*turning to Mítra*]

And him, too?

Svetozár

Him, too.

Yálya-da

Which does she pet more?

Mítra

Him; but then, too, I love him more than myself.

Yálya-da

Oh, but . . . and your papa?

Svetozár

We have different papas. My papa is Iván Tsarévich, a splendid brave knight,—and so kind! He went away and vanished, but I think he will come back—Oh, come back, do, daddy! I want to show you how well I can ride and how far I can shoot with my bow.

Yálya-da

What do you mean? One mama and two papas?

Svetozár

Yes, of course. Mine went away and his arrived.

Mítra

His papa will arrive, and mine will go away.

Svetozár

No, I really do love his papa; he is strong, handsome, and wiser than anybody else on earth. And he loves me; he pats me on the head and lets me have a ride on his horse. For Tsar Márduk I would lay down my head and die.

Yálya-da

Will you take me as your little sister ?

Svetozár

Will you be my bride ? Will you ? How I shall love you ! No one shall ever touch you. Will you ?

Yálya-da

Your sister.

Svetozar

If you like then, my sister. You must stay with us for ever. My name is Svetozár, his Mítra. I go in front of him and prepare the way for him, and he follows me. Mítrenka, my light, my little golden sun, my Mítrik, my little God ! For Mítrenka, my little brother, I would lay down my valorous head and die !

Mítra

Svetozár, tell us a story, the first that comes into your head !

Svetozár

I will, Mítra, I will.

Little Yálya was walking in the garden. Suddenly from somewhere or other there comes the Loathly Worm. You know how red he is, like a hot stove, and his yellow eyes, like a cat's, but as big as a dinner plate. He brandishes his scaley tail, snaps the trees, and says, ' I'll eat Yálya up.' And she cries ! Svetozár, the hero-knight, hears her shrieks. He was still quite young, only eight years old ; but he snatched up the sword of his step-father, Merodákh the Tsar, rushed into the garden and attacked the dragon. And the dragon takes to his heels—ha-ha-ha !—and curls his tail like a dog between his hind legs. But Svetozár slashes him in the back with his sabre. He didn't want to kill him ; he felt sorry for him. The dragon sat up, hisses, covers up his eyes under his brows, and squeaks out, ' Spare my life ! ' And so it all turns out a joke. And that's the end of my story.

Mítra

A fine story, too! Now, Yálya, tell us a story. The first that comes into your head!

Yálya-da

Once upon a time there was a little blue girl. Ever so little. At night she got into a big flower, and the flower rocked, and she went to sleep. At dawn, a little sunbeam flew up to her and said, 'Tk, tk, tk,—time to wake up!' The little girl got out, sat on a butterfly and flew away. The butterfly flies and flies and flies, ever so far. Where? I don't know. What is over there? The little girl flew away ever so far on the butterfly, and never came back.

Mítra

A fine story!

Svetozár

I would have followed on a horse, and found her, too!

Mítra

You with your horse! You couldn't get there on horseback. You want to get everywhere on a horse, Svetozár. To get there you can only ride on a butterfly.

Svetozár

Yes, I suppose so.

Mítra

I will tell a story. This is it.

It was ill with all men, and all men wept. A little boy came. 'Why is it ill with you? Why do you weep?' 'We have a naughty Tsar.' So the little boy marched on to see the Tsar. 'Tsar, why are you naughty?' 'But I am not naughty; I get angry because there are no good people, and so I become naughty.' 'But I am so good.' 'That's not true! There are no good people.' And the little boy said: 'You are angry and want to punish. I am little and have not done anything wrong; so punish me for all of them.' 'Why should I punish the innocent?' 'It

is easier for me to endure than for all of them to be tormented.' The Tsar grew very angry at this. 'What, you sly-boots, trying to get the better of me!'—and he started tormenting him and left off tormenting the others. He tormented him, and said, 'Now if you would rather, I will leave off tormenting you, and will torment the others.' 'No, I would rather not.' Then the naughty Tsar wept and said: 'You are good. Will you forgive me?' And the little boy forgave him. And then the music began to play.

[*Svetozár weeps, Ydlya-da looks in front of her, thinking. A silence. Vasilísa, pensive, comes down the steps. She stops and looks around.*]

Vasilísa

What is it in me is happening?
Why is it my seer-craft faileth?
What is it now lulls my keenness,
Blurs my vision of the distant?
But my heart is all on fire,
And my heart is torn asunder!

PAUSE

Why is it the sun is dimmer?
Why are all the flowers odourless?
Into my soul afar and faintly
Why is it that sounds are wafted?
Surely I live happily on earth!
He is kind to me, none nobler;
He is kind to me, and loves me!
My desires are granted instantly;
All things smile to me, as to the morning.
And have I so few rare jewels?
My two treasures are incomparable,
One a childlike heart, so ardent,—
And another heart ineffable.

PAUSE

Woe is me, but stolen and taken
From my soul is the heart's necessity,
What the heart needs and desires.
Thief, return me my lost treasure!

Years go by, and youth is fading,
Life approacheth the autumn-tide.
And my bosom yearns for embraces,—
Whose ?—Yes, No-one's,—the Unforgotten.
I forbade myself forgetfulness,
And my memory is a torment.
I had one love unreplaceable ;
Of that love I enjoyed so little.
From my soul a thief hath stolen
What my heart needs and desires.
Thief, return me my lost treasure !
Oh, return the unreplaceable !

Svetozár

Mama dear, thou art singing very sadly.

Vasilísa

Ah, here you are, children ! Who is that with you ?

[*Approaches her, and looks at her, startled.*]

Whose little girl is it ?

[*Takes her and leads her away.*]

Oh, whose child is she ?
Let me look into thine eyes ! These are not earthly forces. Who art thou ?

Svetozár

It is Yálya-dew-berry ! Our little sister. She will remain with us for always. Her mama is a Princess of the Moon. She—*Mga*—died, from eating an apple. And her father herds our cows.

Vasilísa

Little maiden, my little maiden, visitor from another country. Daughter of Iván, my traitor, of my own love unforgotten, daughter of him, cruel faithless ! Child, my child, born of a weakling, of one senseless, ever restless, one so poor and so embittered—foreign daughter of my anguish !

Wilt thou be their sister ? Be a sister to my little boys ?

How my heart beats, rends my bosom! Children, would that I might perish! Glistening on thy raven tresses, Vasilísa's tears are streaming, like bright diamonds they hang there.

Mítra

I know now!

Svetozár

What do you know?

Mítra

I've guessed it!

Svetozár

What?

Mítra [*to Vasilísa*]

Mama, I will tell you. You must own up.

Vasilísa

Well, my heavenly sunbeam, tell me!

Mítra

The papa of Yálya who herds our cows is the papa of Svetozár.

Svetozár

Ho-ho-ho—what? What are you making up? Stories or is it true? Tell me!

Mítra

You love him, wait for him, Mama Vasilísa; and he is come.

Vasilísa

Mítra, Mítra, Mítra, my little boy!

Mítra

You love him more than my papa. We will not be angry, mama. You love Svetozár more than Mítra; I also love him better. Do not weep. He who herds our cows—him one must love very deeply. He is here, he is thin, he is afraid, he is wrinkled;—love him!

My papa will not be angry. I, also, want you to give all your love to Svetozár. Mama, if he is sad, you must pet him ; for pain is very painful to him. I love him. If you find it hard to love him very much, to love him and his papa, and to love me as well, and my papa, then do not love us at all, Mama. We will not cry. We will not be angry. We will be merry, Mama ! Svetozár and Yálya, let's go and play !

[*He leads the children away. Svetozár moves away slowly, looking at Mítra, and asking him some question ; but little Mítra goes ahead, taking the others by the hand up the steps. The children go out.*]

Vasilísa

And it is I who cast the first shadow on Mítra's soul ! He must suffer, and it is I, his throne and his root, who first torment him ! But in Rámmon, and the son of Rámmon, suffering flowers into a marvellous blossom. Iván is coming ! He is coming !

[*Enter Iván and Seredín.*]

Seredín

Here you have your wages ! A man who doesn't sleep at nights, doesn't work by day. The night was made for sleep, the day for work. Our time was not allotted to us for roystering and mooning. So let's see no more of you ! Men must be men, and masters masters. Any half and half sort is superfluous,—might even be a thief ! Off you go !

[*Iván moves away slowly without his cap.*]

Vasilísa [*standing midway up the steps*]

Iván Tsarévich !

[*Iván stops as though nailed to the ground, looks round and trembles.*]

Seredín

Tsarévich ? What do you mean, Lady ? [*He looks at Iván*]. Tfu ! Damn—what a blundering ass !

[*Retires hastily, wringing his hands.*]

Iván

I will go, I will flee. . . .

Vasilísa

Iván, come to me.

[*Iván ascends slowly up the steps.*]

Iván [*stumbles on a step*]

No,—I cannot.

Vasilísa

Iván!

[*Iván gets up, moves again, and again falls down and sobs.*]

Vasilísa [*raising him up*]

What is there to forgive? Thou art mine and I am thine.

[*Iván sobs.*]

Vasilísa [*embracing him*]

My joy! My eldest son! Vanished, returned. . . . I hunger for thee! I had no bread and they gave me precious stones for food.

Iván

Vasilísa, let me weep—only weep! By my tears let me absolve myself!

[*Merodákh slowly comes down the steps from above.*]

Vasilísa [*not noticing Merodákh*]

Weep, Ivánushka, weep, my heart's own, if the heart wish to weep! But thou hast naught to repine at. I have nothing to forgive thee. Thou hast nothing to forgive me.

Two-fold the links, the links are welded;
Now we separate, now we unite again;
Now we are parted, now we embrace again;
Or we are cast on strands far distant,
Yet, after æons, we meet again.

Merodákh

Queen!

Vasilísa

King Rámmon!

Merodákh

To Ïochánan's heart thou now returnest.

Vasilísa

He has returned to my heart, Merodákh.

Merodákh

The cycle is fulfilled ; my bliss is gone.

Vasilísa

I have fulfilled my duty ; Mítra lives.

Merodákh

Give me thy hand, place thy hand on my heart.

Vasilísa [*touching his heart*]

Oh, Merodákh my friend, what pain is thine !

Merodákh

Thou understandest. Yet even sevenfold
The pain thy son, bright Mítra, has to brook
In life. With both my hands, I shall hold back
My heart henceforth ; for now I cannot stay
With you ; so to the Fathers I return.

Vasilísa

Yea, Merodákh, depart. I venerate
In thee the husband's strength and majesty
Of grief. Give thou my brow the hallowed kiss.

Merodákh

I give thy lofty forehead now the kiss of anguish,
The kiss of love, the kiss of this, my last farewell !

[*He turns towards the palace.*]

Ye heavens, my Sire, now open wide to me the gates !
Shamash-Baál, who art adorned with gleaming arrows,—
White-tressed Zin, whose eyes are deep with mystery,—
And wizard of the depths, E, Eä, first born of the ocean,—
Amid the thrones, my throne is set inviolate.
Ye heavens, my Sire ! Now open wide to me the gates,
Fair sister, Ishtar, let me quaff Eternity !

[*He ascends. The palace above the steps is transformed. Blinding beams of light pour downward. Golden trumpets resound in chords. The Heavens are revealed. Gigantic golden thrones are seen, and on them the outline of the great gods; at the threshold, Ishtar, titanic, who smiles eternally. She offers a goblet. Meroddkh, advancing, expands to titanic stature; he embraces and kisses his sister; the gods, drawing close together, yield him his place. The Heavens are then withdrawn from view. Only the echo remains, rumbling over the shaken earth.*

Iván and Vasilísa are standing on either side of the lowest step, bowed down. When the last echo has rumbled away, the palace is seen as before, at the top of the steps. The door opens, the three children enter and descend. Svetozar is leading, bearing a sword in front of him, and behind follows Mítra, who looks into the distance.]

Vasilísa

Whither are ye going, children?

Svetozár

On to the earth. We are going to defend the good folk from the evil. That is our game, Mama.

Vasilísa

Iván, how wonderful the children are—all the children—thine and mine! Is it not so, Iván? I have long since thought, but now I understand: we must live for the children, we must serve the children.

Iván

I saw them a long time ago, Vasilísa. Once I was sitting in the garden, bemused, and suddenly the earth parted from under me, and a blue abyss opened out. There I saw two little children's hands beckoning—one light haired, with dancing eyes—charming—and the other with black locks and big eyes. And somebody spoke to my heart, saying: These are thy son and thy daughter! And, gazing even deeper, I saw behind them a wondrous angel, like this little boy, full of thought; and I beheld a green Star over their heads. It was then, also, I saw thee, Vasilísa.

Vasilísa

We must live for children! We must love for children! The race of man will be wise and happy, when children

live for joy, and the elders live for children. Then, we shall go forward! At the height of my earthly wisdom I understand this.

Iván

The children go on. . . . Ye of the future, be ye blesséd!

Vasilísa

Iván, didst thou see the Heavens revealed?

Iván

I dared not raise my eyes.

Vasilísa

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Heaven for the gods, but the Earth for children.

Iván

This is the language of mankind's autumn.

Vasilísa

A season wise and ripe, the season of golden fruits.

Iván

And Yálya did not die; she had children, and prevails over death.

Vasilísa

Everyone who serves children is immortal.

Iván

Look, Vasilísa, how the sunbeams light up Mítra!
How beautiful he is! He raises to the sun his hands!

Vasilísa

And man's divinity on earth shall be the child.

THE END.

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